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SHORT STORIES

A WEEKLY MAGAZINE FOR HOME AND TRAIN

No. 596. FOR WEEK ENDING JUNE 2ND, 1900. [ONE PENNY.

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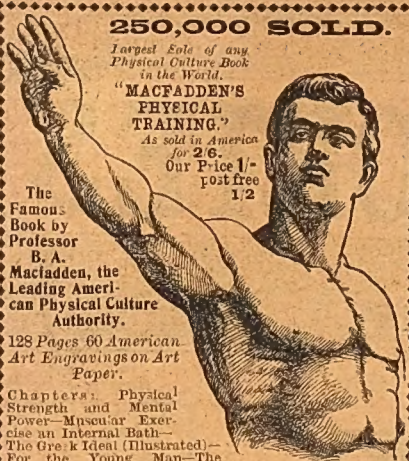

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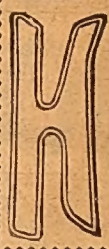

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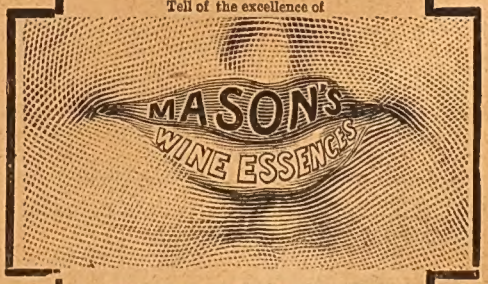

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REPORTED MISSING.

On the morrow, another division was to sail for the seat of war, and Society was busy lionising its officers.

Many of the houses in the West-end were *en fête*; and of these, No. 40 Wemyss Square was a conspicuous example. Indeed, for the number of well-appointed carriages rolling to and from its crimson-carpeted, awning-covered entrance, it took the palm. In fact, all fashionable London seemed to be gathered within its reception rooms. The reason of this unwonted festivity in the Moseley household was not far to seek—at least, not to those who were aware that the daughter of the house, Lady Cecile, was the affianced wife of Captain Granville Berkeley, D.S.O.; for Captain Granville Berkeley, along with his regiment, the 13th Hussars, was under orders for active service.

The Earl of Moseley's circumstances were by no means rosy, and certainly did not admit of such lavish entertaining. But Society has its duties, and the noble Earl considered that on this, the eve of his daughter's *fiancé's* departure, the unloosening of his purse strings was incumbent upon him.

Having arrived at this conclusion, the peer, who was also a widower, rashly gave to Lady Cecile *carte blanche*, and a ball was the immediate result, which in its magnificence was the event of the London season.

There was another result later, the lengthened retirement of Lord Moseley and his daughter to an obscure hamlet in Southern Italy, where living was cheap, and entertaining unnecessary.

But of this, Society knew nothing, other than the information conveyed by a paragraph in the daily paper, to the effect that the Earl of Moseley and his daughter, Lady Cecile, had left town, for an extensive tour on the Continent. But this by the way.

Society accepted Lord Moseley's hospitality, approving volubly of the peer's munificence in public; while in private, it, vulgarly speaking, winked the other eye, making more than a passing reference to the dangers of the campaign, and the fact, which had somehow leaked out, that Captain Berkeley had made a will, bequeathing the whole of his fortune, some seven thousand pounds a year, to Lady Cecile.

This was a solatium which, Society was unkind enough to assert, Lady Cecile would find a more than sufficient compensation, should a Boer bullet find its billet in a vital portion of her lover's anatomy.

Whether Society was right in this somewhat uncharitable surmise remained to be proved.

Certainly, as the strains of a dreamy waltz died away, and Captain Berkeley with his *fiancé*, a tall, slender figure, resting lightly upon his arm, elbowed his way through the fashionable crowd towards the conservatory, the lady's expression was not one of inconsolable grief. Her clear-cut, high-bred features, as classically perfect as those of a Greek statue, were very pale; but then Lady Cecile was always so.

True, there was a certain tightness about the rather thin lips, a constraint of the smile, which she bestowed round and about her as they passed, a contraction of the white forehead, where the faintly outlined blue arteries in the temples seemed to be throbbing somewhat abnormally, which might have indicated a mind not quite at ease; but certainly not the aspect of a girl, however unemotionably high-bred, whose lover was about to say a perhaps last farewell. The contrast between her own and Captain Berkeley's looks was very great. He made no effort to conceal his discomposure.

The strong, sun-burnt face had paled under its Indian tan; the grey-blue eyes, which had often looked unflinchingly at death, amid the wild passes of the Chitral, on the burning sands of Egypt and in a dozen out-of-the-way spots of the earth during his fifteen years' experience of England's little wars, bore a sad wistful expression. The well-shaped head, with the hair thinning early here and there, for he was hardly thirty-five, the white touches of Time's fingers, lacked the usual erectness of carriage.

His depression was very evident. At least so thought the Hon. Neville Oliphant, a sympathetic sub of the captain's regiment, who whispered to his companion:

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"By Jove! Look at 'Berk' of Ours. He's feeling beastly bad over saying 'Good-bye' to La Belle Cecile. I never thought he was so hard hit."

The girl upon the sub's arm glanced towards those of whom he spoke.

"Yes!" she replied, "you are right. He does seem upset, poor fellow. But what of Cecile? Do Lord Byron's words:

> "By those who deepest feel, is ill-expressed,
> The indistinctness of the suffering breast,

apply to her, do you think?"

The sub shook his head doubtfully.

"I don't know," he said, taking a long glance at the pair, who had paused for a moment at the door. "I don't even feel sure that Byron was right, when I see the depths of expression in 'Berk's' eyes. But I do know this, that I'd like the girl I was spoons over, to look a little different to-night."

"You forget," returned the girl, "that it is not good form to show emotion, and Cecile is nothing if not good form."

"Hang good form!" exclaimed the warm-hearted sub hotly. "I beg your pardon, but I hate that rot, which teaches us that it is not *bon ton* to show we've got a heart. The Indian stoicism I used to read about, when I was a youngster, which enabled a chappie to be roasted over a slow fire without yelling, is all very well—in the Indian chappie. But among us, when I see that sort of thing, I always wonder whether the being roasted over a slow fire hurts."

With which lucid exposition of his views the Hon. Neville Oliphant led his fair companion to the refreshment room, while the objects of their conversation disappeared in turn, in the direction of the conservatory.

* * * * *

Society had many correspondents at the front, and for thrilling incidents and unpublished side lights, sent by the officers engaged, it forwarded in return the gossip of its drawing-rooms.

Of Society's most assiduous correspondents, Captain the Hon. Neville Oliphant—formerly a sub in Berkeley's regiment—now three steps advanced in rank, vice 2nd Lieutenants Maurice Drew and Brandon Gerrard, killed in action, and Captain Granville Berkeley, reported missing—was one.

As a reward for many a lengthy epistle "home," the military post bag, one morning, brought him a bulky letter from Lady Janet Ray—an aunt by marriage, and a Society leader by vocation.

He was in his tent when the post arrived, and breaking the seal, he sat himself down to enjoy the luxury of five minutes forgetfulness of things military and African.

But he was doomed to disappointment.

He had barely scanned the first page, when a bugle called him to arms; and much to his disgust—for it was raining heavily, and he had a rooted objection to a wet jacket—he had to thrust the letter into his sabretache, don his sword and service revolver, and hurry without.

Ten minutes later, he found himself, along with his regiment, covering an advance in force upon a rugged kopje, behind which the Boer laagers—which they had received instructions to take at all costs—lay.

"Beastly unpleasant, 'pon honour, on a morning like this, and shows an uncommon disregard, on the General's part, of one's comfort," grumbled the Hon. Neville to a brother officer, as they trotted along through a very torrent of rain, with the patter, patter of which was mingled now and again the chug, chug of a flying bullet, or the scream of a shell, with which the enemy greeted their advance.

"This is just the sort of beastly weather I always take cold in, and my stock of handkerchiefs is running short, and to make matters worse, our Sawbones tells me the quinine is ditto. I can quite see the necessity of ousting these beggars out of their position, but we could just as well have waited for a fine day."

Receiving no reply, but an indulgent laugh from his companion, he went on:

"I was just in the midst of reading a most interesting letter too, from my respected aunt. She writes, among a host

Captain Oliphant turned in his saddle to see his companion drop his reins.

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of other things, that old Moseley's daughter—you know the girl I mean, the marble statue sort of beauty, who was engaged to Berkeley——Eh? What?"

A reply in the affirmative. A sharp 'spat,' a choking, sobbing cry, and Captain Oliphant had turned sharply in his saddle in time to see his companion drop his reins, and as his startled horse sprang forward, fall headlong from the saddle, with a bullet hole in his throat.

The young officer's face paled for a moment, then, as the bullets from the now retreating Boers began to hurtle around him, emptying the saddles right and left, it became set and resolute.

"Poor Granby! Another of us gone," he muttered, then aloud, as the men for a moment wavered under the deadly hail, "Steady, men, steady! Keep your heads, and," gritting his teeth hard, "Please God, we'll give these brutes cold steel in exchange for nickle and lead soon."

They paused at the cot of the man.

When Captain Oliphant found an opportunity to revert to his aristocratic relative's letter, he had kept his word. The Boers had had their fill of cold steel, and been driven headlong from their position; while he was within the canvas walls of their field hospital, under the hands of his regimental surgeon. Around him were numbers of the enemy's wounded, left to the mercy of the victors; while a constant stream of his own countrymen was pouring in, brought by the bearers.

Nonchalant as ever, with a cigar between his teeth, the young captain sat, undergoing the dressing of an ugly bullet wound in his left arm—the pain of which was in no way impeding his garrulity.

"Yes, it was a fairly warmish time before we got at 'em," he was saying, in reply to the doctor's reference to the number of wounded being brought in. "They hammered us unmercifully before we'd worked round to the rear of the kopje—Creusots, Hotchkiss, Maxims, and Mausers, all going at once. Never felt in such a dickens of a funk. It's a fact, 'pon honour!" as the surgeon gave an incredulous laugh. "Felt inclined to cut and run; should, too, if it hadn't been such a beastly example to show the men. They shot down poor Granby just as I was in the midst of telling him some news I'd heard about that Moseley girl, whom Berkeley of Ours, was spoons on. That made me wild, don't you know, and I think I ran amok among 'em, and the men followed. Anyway, I don't remember much about it, except that I slashed and cut right and left, and was just going to run a big, bearded chap through, when he held up a white handkerchief and asked for quarter. Then as I dropped my sword, the ungrateful beggar shot me in the shoulder, and here I am!"

"I wonder what became of Berkeley," said the surgeon abruptly. "Somehow I've an idea he's still alive."

Oliphant shook his head.

"I don't think so," he observed, "though I'd like to, for it would serve the fair Moseley right."

The surgeon, giving the last turn to the bandage, paused and looked up inquiringly.

Oliphant went on:

"You remember that fellow Trebova, the man who came a cropper over the French horse, at Epsom last year. I always had an idea that he was first favourite, and that it was only poor 'Berk's' banking account that put Trebova out of the running. Well, it seems I was right, too, for as I was telling Granby, they're entering for the matrimonial stakes in company after all."

"Wasn't there a report that Berkeley had made a will in the Moseley's favour?" inquired the surgeon.

"There was—and it is true. In the event of his death, she will inherit estates worth a cool seven thousand a year!"

"Hum! And on the strength of this prospective windfall, she and Trebova are marrying?"

"Exactly! The mercenary jade!" exclaimed Oliphant savagely, "and for that reason alone, I hope 'Berk' will turn up; though, poor chap, I'm inclined to think he would have preferred a bullet in the heart, rather than to have heard the news."

"Good Lord! What's the matter with that fellow?"

A suppressed groan from a cot close at hand, had broken in upon their conversation, causing both doctor and patient to look up with a start.

The surgeon—more inured to suffering—gave but a hurried glance at the occupant of the cot, and muttering something about a man in delirium, in response to a call from without, hurried away.

Captain Oliphant looked curiously towards the sufferer, for swathed in surgical bandages as he was

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ragged and unkempt as was the heavy beard covering his chin—there was something in the man's face strangely familiar—something which reminded him of Granville Berkeley.

The man at the same moment turned over, wearily, and buried his face in the pillow, appearing to dose.

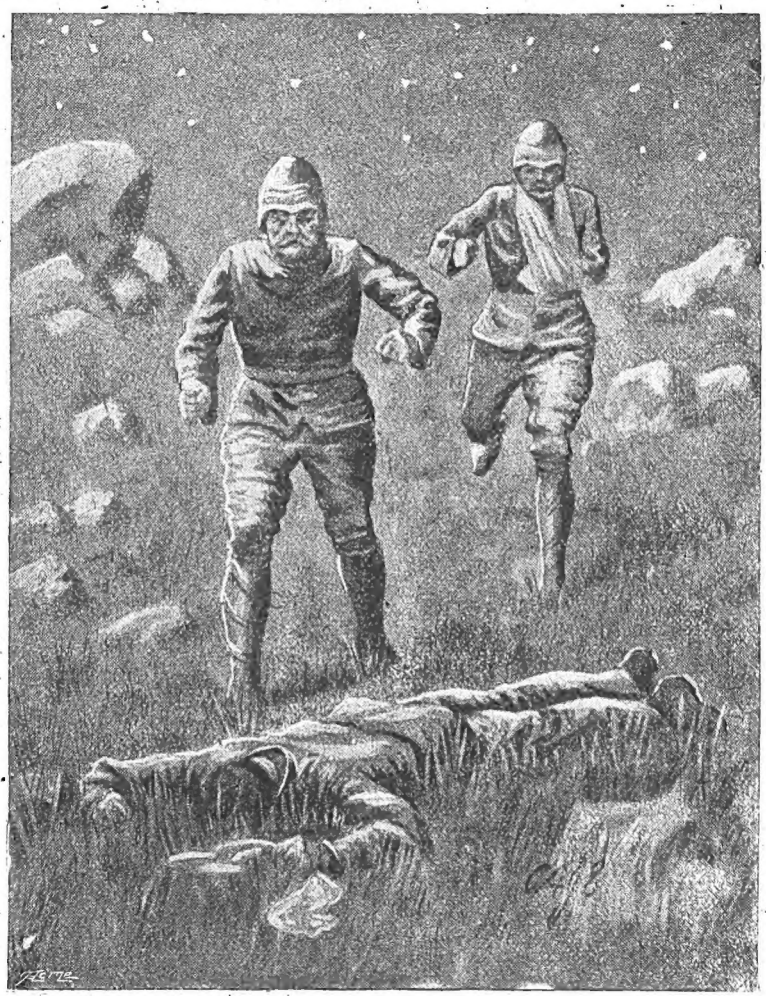
The movement was natural enough, but the young officer had caught a swift glance from a pair of grey-blue eyes, the pathos of whose expression carried his memory irresistibly back to the house in Wemyss Square — to the evening of the Moseley ball.

He passed his hand across his eyes, to convince himself he was not dreaming.

The man had the appearance of an Afrikander — lay in the midst of Afrikanders — the Boer wounded left behind in their hurried flight.

How was it possible that it could be Granville Berkeley?

Yet after all, the man was different from the rest—the small, well-shaped head, the refinement of the features, which neither sickness nor neglect had obliterated, the aristocratic hand, which rested on the coverlet — all recalled the missing soldier. But "Berk" and he had always been such close friends, that it seemed impossible that—if Berkeley it were—he should refuse to make himself known.



Yet not till the bright African moon rose did they find him lying face downwards.

Oliphant could not rest, however, until he had spoken to him.

"I beg pardon!" he said, leaning over the cot, "but I think you and I have met before. Your face seems very familiar, don't you know! I may be mistaken of course, but—— Oh, dash it all!"—with an eager burst—"aren't you 'Berk' of Ours?"

No answer for a moment. Scarcely a sign that his words had been heard, except that the colour crept faintly up into the man's wan cheeks.

Then, as the question was repeated, the fever-cracked lips opened, and a few words of unintelligible Dutch issued from the man's throat.

Faugh! It was a Boer then, after all, and with a hasty apology, in execrable German, which he had an idea was perfectly intelligible to everyone of Teutonic origin, and inwardly cursing himself for an imaginative ass, Captain Oliphant walked disgustedly away.

Still he could not shake off the impression, the man's face haunted him, and hours later, when he again met the surgeon who had dressed his wound, he spoke of the injured Boer's likeness to their missing comrade. The doctor heard him in silence, a puzzled look growing on his face the while. Then with a gesture to Oliphant to follow, he hurried in the direction of the Field hospital.

Making their way through the rows of sufferers, they paused at the cot of the man, of whom they had spoken. It was empty! The man was no longer there!

"Gone, by Heaven!" exclaimed the doctor, staring down in amazement. "Why?"

"Why?" echoed Oliphant, "because he found the coast clear for a moment, I suppose, and had no desire to remain a prisoner in our hands."

"The man was no Boer, depend upon it," returned the surgeon, gravely, "though if he should be whom I suspect, why he should have risked his life by leaving his cot, is a mystery. Listen!" as Oliphant turned, open-mouthed, for an explanation. "The principal Boer surgeon, who was absent, when we took their position, returned a while since to look after his wounded. He spoke to one of my sergeants about this man. He was, so he said, an Englishman, and he believed an officer, whom they had recently discovered—suffering from the effects of a bullet wound in the skull—in the house of a Dutch farmer, loyal to the British.

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"The man, so it appeared, had wandered to the farm, some weeks since, in an almost dying condition. He had, so the farmer gathered from his conversation, which was incoherent in the extreme, been wounded in the battle of Rooifontein, which had taken place the night previously."

"And after which Berkeley was reported missing," ejaculated Oliphant.

"Exactly! He was delirious with the fever of his wound, and his tunic was missing; so there were no means of identifying him, or knowing his rank. It was sufficient, however, to the good peasants, that he was an Englishman, and they gave him shelter, intending when his wound was healed, to assist him back to our lines. To remove the bullet though was beyond their simple skill, consequently, as there was some pressure on the brain, the poor fellow remained in a state of semi-unconsciousness, to the moment when his presence was discovered by the enemy.

"Imagining him to be of some consequence among us, the Boers brought him here, and after a most dangerous operation, the bullet was safely extracted and he was now in a fair way of recovery.

"Since the operation," continued the surgeon, "we have pushed the enemy so hard, and their casualties have been so numerous, that no one among them has had time or opportunity to question the man as to his name and rank."

"It's 'Berk,' I'll swear it!" said Oliphant, a troubled look gathering on his boyish face.

"I should say so, too, if I could understand his having any reason for not making himself known to you."

"Heavens, man! Can't you see that to a quixotic man like Granville Berkeley, we gave a reason enough," groaned the young officer. "Didn't we stand within earshot of his bedside, talking glibly of Trebova and Cecile Moseley? Didn't I let him know that the girl he idolised had never cared a jot for him, and was only waiting for news of his death, to throw herself away, upon a ruined gamester, who wasn't good enough to fasten his puttees?"

"Then you think——?"

"I don't know what to think. I only know that I could kick myself for having spoken, and that he must be found before he does anything desperate."

"In his present state, I judge he will not have gone far," was the quiet response.

The young officer—too hurried to grasp the depth of meaning in the other's words—hastened without, inquiring right and left for traces of the man they sought.

Yet not till the bright African moon rose, did they find him, lying face downwards—dead.

In one hand was grasped the bandage, which he had torn from his wound, in the other, the miniature of a woman, set in gold, and mounted with precious gems.

It was the surgeon who gently removed the miniature from the clenched fingers, and Oliphant who recognised the beautiful, cold face.

"Cecile Moseley!" he said. "I knew it! The ——" he ground out an execration from between his clenched teeth, "will get her wish after all. I'd give the world to keep her waiting though. Now if only——" and he paused, and looked anxiously at his companion.

The surgeon in his turn examined the miniature carelessly.

"I fail to recognise this, as the portrait of Cecile Moseley," he said, "and there is practically no other clue to connect this poor fellow with Granville. Captain Granville Berkeley has been reported missing, I see no reason for that report to be altered." And with a sudden movement, he hurled the miniature far out across the veld.

Then he extended his hand to Captain the Hon. Neville Oliphant, which the latter pressed silently.

HUBERT BARTLETT.

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NOT A COWARD.

"*Caramba! Que insoloncia!*" The words were uttered by a lovely woman whose flushed cheek, flashing eye, and knitted brow, spoke even more than words the indignation which filled her breast.

She was the young wife of Commodore Coe, the commander of the small Navy of the State of Montevideo.

The lady was Spanish by birth as well as in feelings, and the cause of her anger was the sight of a ship which had been for two days standing off and on before the harbour, using every signal of insult and defiance to induce the ship of Commodore Coe to come out and fight her.

This he could not do, for two reasons: The first was illness, which confined him to his cot; the second, that he had not one-third of a crew—not even men sufficient to man his guns.

At the moment when she uttered the words which commence this tale, Brown, the admiral of the Buenos Ayres ship, had hoisted a flag at his gaff, whereon was embroidered, in legible letters, "Coe, the Coward." This was more than his noble wife could stand; for well she knew her husband's truth and valour.

After gazing an instant at the flag she raised her jewelled hand, and, taking from her finger a diamond of great value, cried to the officers and men who stood around her on the deck:

"I will give this diamond to any man who will bring me yonder flag."

For a moment there was no response; the men looked at their officers—the officers glanced at each other—but volunteers for so desperate a service seemed scarce.

"What, is there not one of all your number who dares the trial? Is my husband's ship, then, indeed manned by cowards?" exclaimed the lady, while her beautiful lip curled with scorn, and her flashing eye sparkled with the fire of contempt.

A young officer—an Englishman—who had been lately appointed, stepped forward, and modestly said:

"I was only waiting for my seniors to speak, senora. Had any of them volunteered, I should have begged to accompany him. As it is, I pledge myself to bring you yonder flag before the sun rises, or die in the attempt. But I ask not your jewel as a prize for my success—one tress of your glossy hair shall be my reward."

"You shall have both, brave boy," replied the lady, and her cold look of scorn changed into a sweet smile as she asked his name.

"It is Cochrane Bennett, senora," replied the youth, and he blushed beneath her earnest gaze.

He was slim but well formed, looked very young, but in his dark-blue eye and compressed lip an observer could read one whose manhood was not made by years alone.

The sun was setting behind a bank of slowly-rising clouds, which threatened darkness and a storm.

The moment that his services were accepted young Bennett turned to the crew, and, as he glanced over them, said:

"I want six men to man the whaleboat that hangs at the after-davits."

Struck by his gallantry nearly one-half of the crew stepped aft—now that they had a leader, volunteers were plenty.

Bennett glanced his eye over them, and in a few moments selected six whom he knew to be both daring and firm—they were British sailors.

"Go and sharpen your cutlasses," said he. "I shall not have a musket or pistol in the boat. If we fight it must be steel to steel and breast to breast, for we must succeed or die."

The men answered only by a look, for they were of a class whose motto is "Deeds—not words."

They hurried below to obey orders, while others proceeded by his directions to muffle the oars of the boat and to put a sail and water into it.

One half hour later the sky was covered with clouds and darkness had set in.

Bennett had been careful to take the compass course of the enemy's ship when the last light of the dying day gave the opportunity, and by this alone he hoped to find her. At this time the lady was on deck, standing by the binnacle-light, regarding the preparations of the party who were about to shove off.

At the moment the boat's crew cried out that all was ready for a start the young leader came aft to the side

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of the senora, and taking from his neck a miniature he handed it and a letter to her, saying:

"If I am not on board at sunrise, senora, please to send the miniature and letter to its address."

The senora looked at the portrait—it was the likeness of a young and beautiful girl.

A tear filled the senora's eyes.

"You need not go," said she. "No, you love—perchance are beloved. Your life is precious—I will not expose it."

"This is my only sister, whom I almost adore," interrupted the youth; "but one who would scorn me if I played the coward or dishonoured my name. Send the letter and likeness to her if I fall. Farewell till to-morrow or for ever."

The lady was about to answer, and again to entreat him to stay, but ere she could speak he was over the bulwarks and the boat had shoved off.

"Give way cheerily, men! A long pull, a strong pull and a pull altogether!" said our young hero in a low tone as he left the ship's side, and he soon felt, by the trembling of the frail boat, that his orders were obeyed.

The night was very dark.

A calm was on the deep, and in the air, but it was portentous of a storm.

A small binnacle-light and compass had been placed in the boat, and by these Bennett shaped his course—himself taking the tiller and steering right out into the offing, regardless of the coming storm and rising clouds, keeping his eye steadily fixed on the compass—knowing that if the vessel had remained hove-to at sunset, he must be very near her.

But he looked in vain to see her dark hull loom up in the gloom; he looked in vain to see a light which might guide him to her. But Admiral Brown was too old a fox to betray his position by lights.

At this moment, when he was completely at a loss which way to steer, the dark clouds which had been gathering overhead burst with a long, vivid flash of lightning and a peal of deafening thunder—but he heard not the thunder, he heeded not the rising storm. That flash of lightning had shown him the vessel, not one cable's length from him.

"Steady, boys—steady!" he whispered when the thunder ceased; "I shall pull under her stern and get on deck by the carved work and netting on her quarter."

The men pulled slowly and silently on; and as he had marked well her position, the young officer in a moment found himself close under the vessel's stern. At this instant another flash of lightning illumined the sky and water; and then, as he glanced up the gaff, where the flag had been hoisted, he saw it was not there—it had been hauled down.

He paused, thought for a moment what could be done, and then formed his resolution.

"I shall go on board alone, men!" said he. "Keep the boat where she is! If the flag is where I think it is—in the admiral's cabin—I will have it! If I am not back in five minutes, and you hear an alarm shove off and go back to our ship and tell them that Cochrane Bennett died like a man! You must be cautious! Reef the foresail—for the storm will be down upon us in ten minutes!"

All this was whispered to the men, whose heads were leaned forward to hear the orders they dared not disobey, much as they wished to share their leader's peril.

Springing lightly from the boat, Bennett caught the quarter-nettings with his hands and noiselessly ascended to the bulwarks. He could hear the regular tramp of the officer of the deck—who, having already had everything reefed down for the blow, had nothing to do but to pace the deck—for it was so dark that he could not see him.

A second more and the brave boy was down on the deck and at the cabin door, which stood slightly open.

He peeped through the narrow crack and saw the red-faced old admiral seated at his round table, with two of his officers by his side, engaged over the contents of a square bottle which looked very like that usually found to contain schnapps.

A glance at a settee just to the left of the table showed the object of his enterprise. The flag, for which he had perilled his life, lay there, where it had been carelessly thrown after it was hauled down.

The young hero did not pause long to consider what to do, but quietly walked into the cabin, and, taking off his cap very politely to the admiral and officers, said in a calm and courteous manner to the admiral:

"I am come to borrow this flag to wear to-morrow, if you please, sir!"

"Who the dickens are you? What do you mean?" cried Admiral Brown as he and his officers sprang to their feet.

"I am Midshipman Bennett, sir, of the Montevidean service," replied Cochrane, who had now seized the flag, "and mean to carry the flag to Commodore Coe!"

As he said this he bounded to the cabin door, followed by a bullet from the admiral's pistol, which grazed his ear, and ere the alarm became general he stood upon the taffrail of the vessel.

"Look out for me below!" he shouted, and flung himself into the sea without a moment's hesitation. His boat's crew recognised his voice; he was caught up in a moment and dragged into the boat, while a volley of pistol shots was fired at random by those who were above.

The storm had now broken out and the wind began to come on with fierce and fitful gusts.

"Up the foresail—be in a hurry, lads!" cried the young hero as soon as he could draw breath after his ducking.

The crew did so, and the next moment the little boat was flying towards the harbour before the blast, like a seabird winging its way to its young one's nest.

The enemy opened a harmless fire of grape shot in the direction, but it only served to tell the anxious watchers on board of Commodore Coe's vessel that something had occurred.

The latter, therefore, at once showed lights to enable our young hero to make a straight course for her.

It was about half an hour after the first gun had been fired by Admiral Brown's vessel when the boat of the young hero rounded to alongside of his own ship.

"Have you captured the flag?" cried the señora, as Bennett bounded over the side.

The only answer she received was the banner, wet as it was from the water, and cut in two places by the balls which had been fired at its captor.

The lights of the vessel gleamed not so bright as did that lady's eyes when she caught the noble youth in her arms and kissed him again and again.

U. J. Minter.

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Mr. Bowser's Tribulations.

VIII.—IT WAS A BEDSTEAD AND A BUREAU WHICH SPOILT A HAPPY EVENING.

MR. BOWSER had about half finished his cigar and his evening newspaper when Mrs. Bowser looked up from her sewing and said:

"I wish you'd stop at some furniture shop in the morning and see if you can get a man for an hour or two. I want the things moved out of the spare bedroom and the carpet taken up."

"That's a fair specimen of your economical way of doing things," answered Mr. Bowser. "There's about ten minutes' work to be done, and yet you'd pay a man thirty shillings or two pounds instead of asking me."

"You ought to get a man for five shillings; and the last time you took down a bedstead you——"

"The idea of paying enough money to buy two tons of coals for ten minutes' work!" he interrupted. "When I sit down and think over your reckless extravagance, I wonder that we have a shilling in the bank. What is it to take down a bedstead, to move a bureau out into the passage, to rip up a carpet? I'll have the room empty in five minutes."

He got the cumbersome mass clear of the wall and on the move.

"But I thought I'd have the bureau brought down stairs."

"Well, that may take two minutes longer."

"And you know the bedstead is big and solid, and once when you started to take it down you br——"

"I know nothing about it. If I ever started to take it down, then down it came. I don't propose to pay out my hard-earned money for somebody to come up here and loaf about. It is now exactly seven o'clock. In five minutes the room will be empty, and one minute later I shall be back here again."

"I'll pay a man out of my own pin money," protested Mrs. Bowser.

"You'll pay nothing," he replied as he started upstairs followed by the family cat.

No preparations had been made for removal. Mr. Bowser entered the bedroom to find the bed undisturbed but with one wide sweep of his arm he gathered up blankets, sheets and pillows and carried them down the passage. Then he returned and gave the mattress a twist and a whirl which flopped it off the bed and out of the door, and the spring mattress came next. Mr. Bowser was whistling and working to the time of the "Absent-Minded Beggar." No man can pick up a spring mattress and keep strictly to the beat. The cat saw the impending calamity and leaped to the top of the bureau.

As Mr. Bowser lifted up the mattress and gave it a bounce he lost his balance and went down with a crash, and the spring mattress, having nowhere else to go, followed him. He was fighting it off with hands and feet when Mrs. Bowser looked in at the door and exclaimed:

"Thank heaven that the life has not been crushed out of you!"

"Crushed be hanged!" he yelled as he got rid of the mattress and stood up. "If you imagine I'm the sort of man to be crushed under a blamed old spring mattress you don't know me!"

"I knew you'd have trouble, and that was the reason I wanted you——"

"There's no trouble about it. The silly cat tripped me up. I'm big enough and old enough to boss this job, and you get back downstairs and attend to your knitting."

There are two ways of taking down a mahogany bedstead weighing a ton or two. Mr. Bowser's way was peculiarly his own.

His first move was to grab the footboard and wrench and twist and draw the whole bed across the room and push it back again. Then he stood off and kicked at the rails until the heels flew off his slippers.

It was a sudden inspiration which caused him to lift up the ends of the rails, and to his great surprise they were loosened from the head and footboards. The footboard he managed to move down the passage without accident, but when he came to the headboard, he

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realised that a desperate struggle was at hand. So did the cat, and in her wisdom she retreated to the passage to await events.

"Why in thunder my great grandfather didn't use this lumber to build a stable is more than I can make out!" growled Mr. Bowser as he surveyed the massive structure and waited for his second wind.

It had to be moved, however, and there was no time to figure up hydraulic power and electric motors.

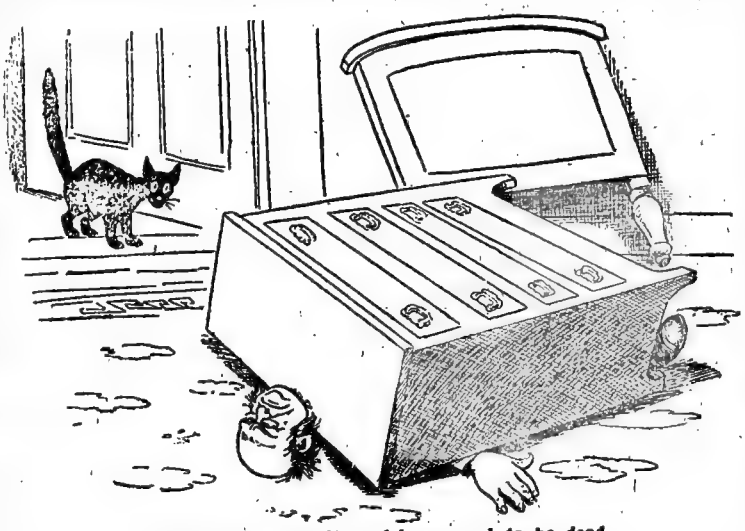
Mrs. Bowser crept up and sat on the stairs and shivered, and the cat walked to and fro in the passage and had nervous tremors, while Mr. Bowser moistened his hands and looked furtively about for a point of vantage.

Suddenly he jumped forward and made an attack. His object was to take the bedstead by surprise and run it down the passage before it could make a move in defence.

He succeeded to a degree—that is, he got the cumbersome mass clear of the wall and on the move for the door, and Mrs. Bowser was beginning to breathe easier and the cat feeling more hopeful, when there was a yell of terror and a crash which shook things right down to the cellar bottom.

The headboard had jibbed.

Mr. Bowser thought the whole of London's Hooligans had attacked him for a moment, and the jump he made as he yelled out ought to be preserved in the history of athletics. He struck his head against the wall with a bump which made him see stars, but he had saved his life.



He lay there under it, and he seemed to be dead.

"I knew it," said Mrs. Bowser, as she looked into the room and saw the headboard flat on the floor and Mr. Bowser wiping the dampness off his bald head.

"Has anybody asked for your opinion?" he replied as he tried to assume a careless air.

"I thought you were surely killed. I hope you will now let the rest of it go and send up a man. You see, you don't know how——"

"Oh, I don't, eh? But I'll show you that I do. I'll clear this furniture out if I break both legs and drive my head through the wall."

Mrs. Bowser went back to her seat on the stairs, and, after lifting her eyes in appeal, the cat got as far down the passage as she could.

It was Mr. Bowser's plan to lull the headboard into a feeling of security by giving it a brief rest while he tackled the bureau. To get the bureau out he must move it over the headboard. He had no statistics at hand to consult, but he had great confidence in his lifting powers.

Mrs. Bowser heard him suddenly rush upon that bureau and pull it away from the wall. Then she heard him gasping and grunting as he lifted at the corners. She followed him with her ears as he walked round behind it and put his shoulder to the wheel and got a brace for his feet. There was a louder grunt, a muttered, "Get up there, confound you!" and then the house was shaken again.

Mr. Bowser had heaved up, and the bureau had heaved down, and the loss of his toe-hold at a critical moment had given the bureau the victory. He lay there under it, and he seemed to be dead. The cook was summoned through the speaking tube, and by their united exertions the two women lifted the bureau and rolled the unconscious form of Mr. Bowser aside. It wasn't a case of death. He had simply been squeezed as flat as a pancake and had his bones twisted about. Mrs. Bowser had scarcely taken his head in her lap and moistened his nose with camphor when he opened his eyes and sat up.

"Who — who pushed the old bureau over me?" he demanded as soon as he could get his breath.

"Why, no one, of course," answered Mrs. Bowser. "You were trying to lift it up, you know, when——"

"When you sneaked into the room and jammed against it and hoped I would be squeezed to death! I might have known you would do it. Woman, although you have been foiled again, this is the end. You have tried assassination once too often."

"But how can you say——"

"That will do. It's as plain as day. I'll now drag my limping, bleeding body to the library and prepare the papers, and to-morrow our respective solicitors can arrange about the separation, and alimony. Not a word—not a single word. I see through it all, and, baffled murderess, I wish you good night and pleasant dreams!"

M. Quad.

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JACK ORTON ought to have been a happy man, but strange to say he was not.

Two months ago the mere fact that he was walking down the street with Edith Sampson would have been joy unspeakable. But that was two months ago, and to-day this was not enough. He desired other and greater privileges.

The distance between them was not great, literally, as they walked along. In fact they often, and perhaps purposely on his part, touched elbows. But to Jack they seemed to be separated by an impenetrable, unsurmountable wall. The obstacle was, however, nothing so extensive as a wall, but it was quite as material. It was a "toupee."

How Jack cursed the day when he had been tempted to don the thing. Better far if he had made her acquaintance, and paid his addresses to her, bald as an eggshell as he was. Then he might have at least courted her with a clear conscience, and without the moral obligation of confessing to the fraud of the soft ambrosial locks which surrounded his handsome face.

Jack was not a coward, he was not in the least faint-hearted upon ordinary occasions, but he felt that never in his life had he been obliged to face a situation so tragic, so critical.

How often had the thought of that wretched wig deterred him, when an eloquent avowal was ready to burst from his lips. A man in a wig was so ridiculous. Any other infirmity would have been less objectionable. For instance, he thought he might have owned to false teeth with a better grace.

Sometimes he resolved to keep silent on the subject, and win her under false colours if he could, which in his humble adoration and modest self-depreciation he deemed hardly possible. Then would come the horrible thought that after they were married the dread disclosure was bound to come. She would never have confidence in him after that. Edith was the soul of frankness herself, and had lofty, almost Quixotic notions of truth and honour.

But then, to precede a declaration of affection by the announcement that he was bald was simply ridiculous, and try as he would, John had never been able to introduce the subject casually. Much as he dreaded it, he often tried to lead up to it. Many times he had imagined himself saying in the most careless fashion:

"Oh, by the way, did you know that I wear a wig? A terrible attack of typhoid left me with the merest fringe of hair, and it has never come on again. Odd, isn't it?"

But he never said it. He was always interrupted by some trivial occurrence, which his reluctance and sensitiveness made sufficient cause for postponement of the dreaded confession. This very day he had had such an excellent opportunity to make the break.

They had stopped before a street window to inspect some actor's wigs, and he had just opened his mouth when Edith said:

"Oh, Jack, look! Isn't that magnificent?"

And turning, he saw in the next window a woman who advertised somebody's hair restorer by standing there, and displaying to the public gaze her long hair, falling like a veil until it swept the floor.

How Jack hated hair restorers! He had tried every one on the market.

Edith inspected the splendid locks with pleased interest.

"Isn't it beautiful," she said. "If there's one feature of beauty I admire more than any other, it is a fine head of hair," and she complacently tucked a hair-pin back in her own shining coils.

That settled Jack for the afternoon. The carefully arranged speech froze upon his lips, and he became silent, depressed and miserable.

To the passers-by they were a remarkably handsome and well-mated young couple as they walked along together—Jack, erect, athletic in figure and immaculately attired; Edith, smart and up-to-date in a well-fitting tailor-made gown and a smart hat tipped over her pretty eyes, and resting jauntily on her bright hair.

Edith's own hair was beautiful. Red, gold or bronze, according to whether you saw it in sunshine or shadow, it curled about her face and neck in bewildering little rings, and lay against her well-shaped head in many braids and coils, most cunningly arranged.

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Jack thought that, unloosed, it must be quite as long and splendid as that of the woman in the window.

Alas! he thought, he would never be permitted to see it thus. A wild notion seized him of casting his wretched headgear away and falling at her feet, crying tragically:

"Take me as I am or spurn me forever from your presence." But he thought of his shining pate, and groaned. "No use," he said drearily to himself, "she would simply laugh if I told her, and I could never stand it, to have her laugh at me, though I shouldn't blame her. A man in a wig is so silly." And while she seemed so unattainable, she had never appeared so desirable.

To the most casual observer, it was quite evident from their attitude, that they were both very gone indeed, although each was honestly unaware of the depth of the other's feelings. They had eyes and ears for nothing. So absorbed was their attention in their own supremely interesting affair that as they crossed the muddy street, they neither saw the frantic gestures of the policeman who stood at the crossing, nor heeded the shout of two or three persons as a runaway horse dashed round the corner; and that was the reason why they were both knocked down by the wheel of the light trap.

When the horse was brought to a standstill a little further up the road, and the excited crowd closed in upon the startled pair, it was found that the accident was really a more serious thing than it had first appeared.

Jack was badly bruised and shaken up, but able in a few minutes to stagger to his feet; but as for Edith, that was quite a different matter.

In falling she had struck her head against the curb and lay white and limp, giving no sign of life when lifted up. Jack felt sure that she was dead, and leaned sick and faint against a lamp-post.

Things move rapidly in a great city, and it scarcely seemed a moment before an ambulance was brought up. In a trice strong arms had lifted the unconscious girl into it, and Jack, stunned and dazed, crept along beside it, not knowing what he did, or where he went.

Arrived at the hospital, he recovered somewhat, and when they had laid her down, yet white and still, he grew braver and stronger at the physician's words of encouragement.

"Only stunned by the blow, I assure you," he said cheerfully. "There's a cut on the head, but it's not a bad one, and when it is dressed, we'll soon bring her round. Undo her hair, will you please, nurse?"

Jack's eyes followed wistfully the woman's deft fingers as she removed hairpins and unwound coils Suddenly her hand made a movement which had the effect of paralysing him. He looked at her with surprise and horror.

Nearly the whole of Edith's hair seemed to fall off in her hands, leaving upon her head the merest wisp. She tossed it carelessly upon a table near by, and seized the scissors to trim the locks round the wound.

Jack gazed with an increasing fascination upon the shining mass on the table. It was fastened together with a hard little loop. He had seen such things before in hair-dressers' windows.

As he gazed earnestly at it, his heart grew large and light. It seemed to him as if he must shout for joy.

All the dark, dismal clouds which had heretofore hung over the skies of his courtship had suddenly rolled away. What a glorious vista the future offered!

When the wound was neatly dressed the nurse went away, leaving her fast-recovering patient in his charge. Did the kind soul appreciate the situation?

Jack believed that she did. With proud assurance he lifted her dear head upon his shoulder, and stroked back the pretty tendrils which fell over her forehead. If the button which the nurse had wound trimly and tightly at the back of her head had been less tiny and funny, he would not have been so hilariously happy.

"Edith darling," he whispered softly.

Then he seemed to choke and hesitate. The old embarrassment had returned, and threatened to make him dumb, but he remembered the hair on the table, took fresh courage, and went bravely on with what he had wished so long to say.

"I was a stupid thing to let you get hurt this afternoon. I don't know if you'll think you could trust me to take care of you always, as I want to do, since this has happened. Could you, Edith?"

Edith nestled the little button more cosily into the hollow of his shoulder.

The faint colour had begun to creep back into her cheeks, and there was a light in her eyes and a smile on her face which made Jack's heart thump furiously.

"Oh, Jack," she sighed, weakly, but contentedly, "what an awfully long time you've been saying it!"

E. T. Burton.

Google

On Active Service.

WHEN the office chaps who're paid to do the spouting,
The big tin pots who run the gas work show,
Have strained themselves to come out top in shouting,
Have been done brown at playing bluff-and-blow;
When the tons of love and kisses in the billy-doos they write
Have changed to nasty questions and remarks not quite polite,
When the British agent kicks the mat and puts his hat on tight,
It's getting near the time for us to go.

Time for us to go,
Ta-ra-ra!
Time for us to go.
We're the last resource of diplomacy,
And it's time for us to go!

With "great regret" they issue marching orders,
And we line up in the yard, all in a row;
There's a gilt-edged band to brighten up the borders,
And a general on a gee-gee in the show;
And the crowd comes out to holler with a reg'lar three times three,
And the girl we leave behind us holds the kiddies up to see,
And we feel a sudden choking where our silly hearts should be—
It's a wrench when it's time for us to go.

Time for us to go,
Ta-ra-ra!
Time for us to go.
The trooper's shrieking in the dock,
And it's time for us to go!

Of course the beastly Channel starts a-chopping,
And we feel we want to go and die below;
So they give us small arms drill to set us hopping,
And there's polishing to keep us in a glow.
And they shove the ship to contract speed and just a trifle more,
For we are reinforcements and they're needing of us sore,
It's red-hot hump and hurry on the way to white men's war—
Things are shifting when it's time for us to go.

Time for us to go,
Ta-ra-ra!
Time for us to go.
Cape Town is running special trains,
And it's time for us to go!

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They land us with a cheering song and chorus,
They're very pleased to see T. A. and Co.;
We mustn't stop, we quick-march straight before us,
They head us north, and there in front's the foe.
We stand up straight to meet them, and if they get in the way
We have to push them over—and it isn't done in play—
We're on the Queen's Own Business, and She won't brook delay—
There is hustling when it's time for us to go.

Time for us to go,
Ta-ra-ra!
Time for us to go.
We're expected in Pretoria,
And it's time for us to go!

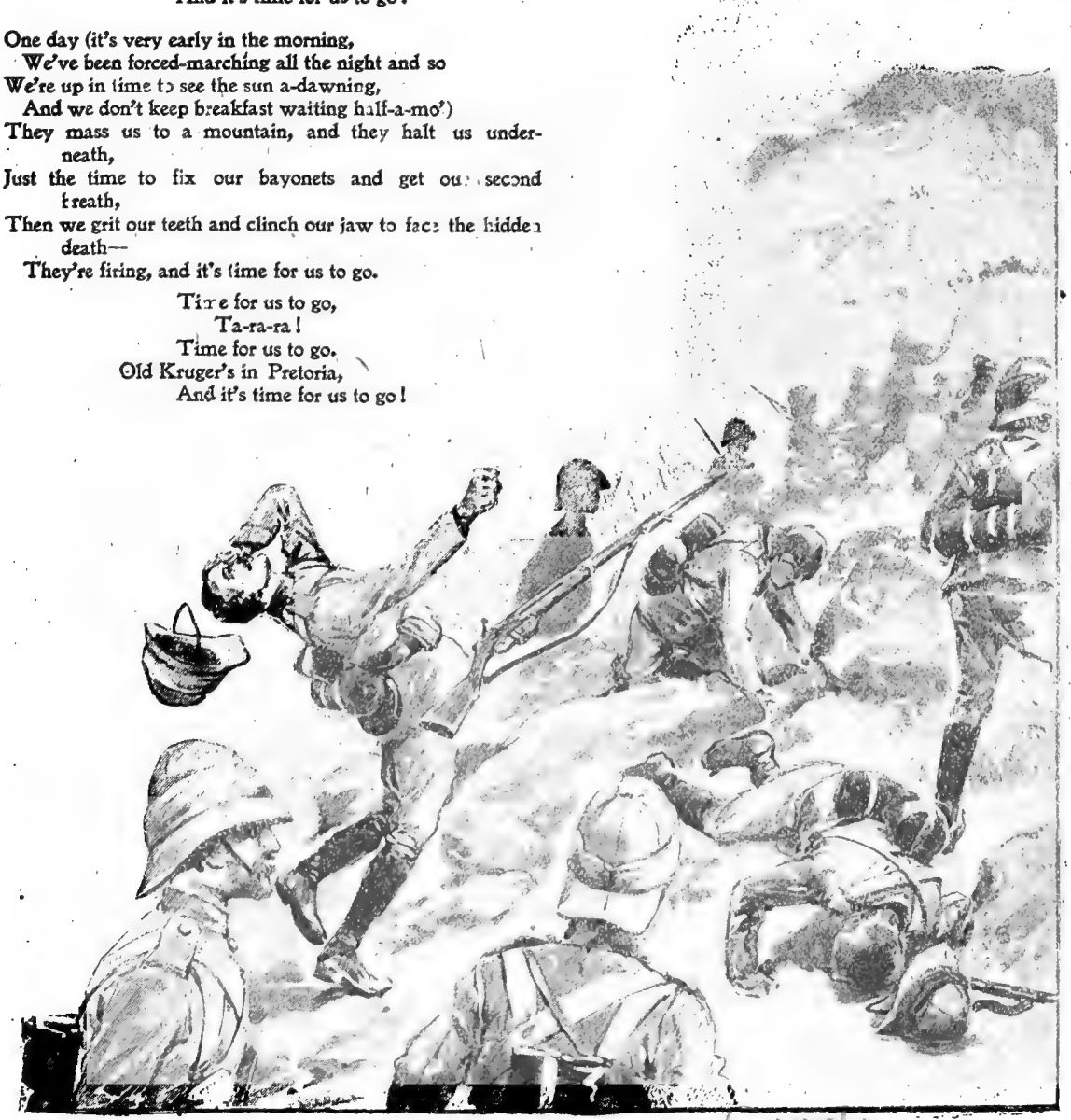
One day (it's very early in the morning,
We've been forced-marching all the night and so
We're up in time to see the sun a-dawning,
And we don't keep breakfast waiting half-a-mo')
They mass us to a mountain, and they halt us underneath,
Just the time to fix our bayonets and get our second breath,
Then we grit our teeth and clinch our jaw to face the hidden death—
They're firing, and it's time for us to go.

Time for us to go,
Ta-ra-ra!
Time for us to go.
Old Kruger's in Pretoria,
And it's time for us to go!

We still press on, there isn't any waiting,
From rock to rock we're darting to and fro,
The way we flounder's worse than fancy skating,
Yet up and on the khaki columns flow.
Red is the fire before us, at our feet the sand is red,
The ranks are thinning as we stride across the fallen dead,
But our officers are leading and they point the way ahead—
Conquer or die, it's time for us to go.

Time for us to go,
Ta-ra-ra!
Time for us to go.
We shan't be home for Whitsun—but
It's time for us to go!

ALFRED SLADE.



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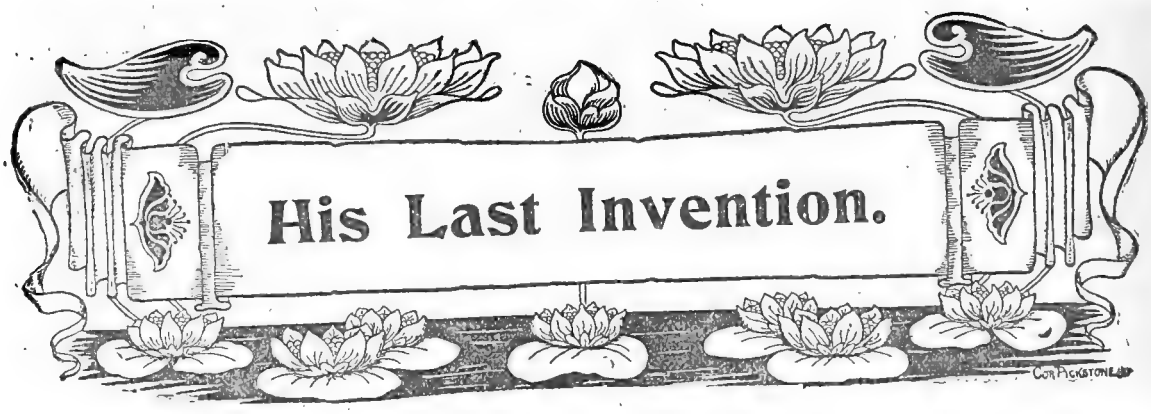

His Last Invention.

Richard Wilson strode moodily up and down his workshop, which was littered with the odds and ends of machinery which represented the ruins of a hundred castles in the air. He was always inventing, was Wilson; always spending days and nights over the manufacture of some wonderful machine or other which was to revolutionize the world and make him famous, only to find after all his labour some irremediable flaw in his plan which rendered the completion of the machine an impossibility, or prevented it working.

He gazed round him on the gaunt skeletons, in wood and brass, of past hopes, and clenched his hands fiercely.

"A failure! Everything in my life is a miserable failure!" he cried aloud, as he paced the floor.

It was not the breakdown of an ordinary invention, however, that wrung the bitter words from him. He had grown accustomed to waking in the morning with an idea worth millions in his head, and going to bed at night with the knowledge that it was not worth a million match-sticks; and had become quite philosophical over the failure of his plans for money-making.

But this time it was a different arrangement that had broken down, an arrangement by which the inventor hoped to make himself a married man; and the mainspring, in the shape of Annie Downs, the woman he loved, had failed him. In his clenched hand he held the letter she had sent him, abruptly announcing that she wished to break off their engagement.

There was a revolver lying on the inventor's bench, which had thrice had its barrel pointed towards his forehead, but three times the man's purpose had failed him at the decisive moment.

The fact of his cowardice added to the man's irritation against himself.

"I fail in everything that would make life worth living, and cannot even kill myself," he went on, in his daring soliloquy. "Must everything I try prove a failure?"

He took up the revolver once more with sudden determination, and holding the barrel between his teeth, pulled the trigger. There was a click, but nothing more; he had forgotten, after all, to load the thing.

He had failed once more to kill himself, and the nervous shock he had experienced had made it impossible for him to repeat the attempt. He must think of something, he told himself, which would make the last act easier for him.

He was determined on suicide, and committed himself by informing Annie of his intentions; but when the single movement of a finger was in a moment to make all the difference between life and death, his physical courage deserted him, and his finger became powerless. He must prepare some plan for killing himself in which the exact moment of his death would be decided by chance or the action of machinery.

The idea pleased him by suggesting the need of invention, a need which his mind was always ready to meet, and he set himself with a melancholy pleasure to think out the details of a killing-machine which should fulfil all his requirements. Death must be painless and instantaneous, of course, but must act at a different moment from that at which the victim took the decisive action which would make his fate certain and unchangeable.

He drew out a plan rapidly, making rough sketches of the mechanical details on the back of Annie Downs' fatal letter.

Then he went down to his forge on the floor below, and worked hard at the manufacture of the instrument he had invented. It was finished by midnight, and, in a grim sort of way, Richard Wilson was proud of his work.

The invention was in the form of a dynamite bomb, which would explode by the slow action of an acid eating through a barrier of cement. One of his past failures had left him with the dynamite on his hands. It was inclosed in a carefully welded iron case, joined strongly, so that once the case was closed it could only be opened by the exercise of considerable force. It was connected as strongly to an iron chain, which the inventor fastened round his waist, joining the two ends with a padlock. When he had locked it he laid the key on his anvil, and, with a stroke of his hammer, beat it out of shape.

To get away from his anvil and tools, with the chance they still offered him of changing his mind and breaking the chain round his waist, as well as to save the empty house from needless injury, the inventor put on his hat and walked out into the country road that stretched in front of his lonely dwelling.

He walked along rapidly, anxious, while his determination remained firm, to place as great a distance as possible between himself and any chance of undoing his handiwork. There was not a soul abroad, of course, at such an hour, and Wilson had no fear of injuring anybody but himself by the explosion that now he was expecting every moment.

When the road took him near any habitation he made a wide circuit, to keep it outside the range of the dynamite bomb round his waist. With the same thoughtfulness for others he stopped, when, after about half-an-

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hour's walk, he caught sight of the figure of a woman approaching him. He was like a man with the plague, whom it was dangerous to approach, and Richard was about to turn precipitately, and get out of the woman's way, when something in her figure struck him as familiar.

The night was a moonlight one, and in the middle of the road where she was walking it was as clear as noonday. A second glance told him that his suspicion was right; it was Annie Downs hurrying along the road.

In the complete surprise of seeing her in such a spot at such an hour, the thought of his invention went clear out of his head. It was due to go off at any moment now; but Richard was so astonished that he actually forgot its existence.

He hurried forward.

"Hullo, Annie!" he said, "what are you doing here?"

For answer the girl flung her arms round his neck and burst into tears. She had hurried as fast as the train would bring her to him immediately on receiving his letter with its hint of suicide, and had walked from the nearest station, three miles further up the road, expecting to reach his house only in time to find him a corpse.

She sobbed for five minutes on his breast without being able to speak a word in the relief of finding him alive.

The letter which he had received, and which she was supposed to have written, she had never heard of except through his reproaches. It was a forgery, no doubt, concocted by some spiteful acquaintance of his or hers to ruin their happiness. She loved him with her whole heart and soul, she sobbed, and could never dream of giving him up.

It seemed to poor Richard Wilson, who loved her more than his life, to find that all the mental agony through which he had passed had been without cause or basis made him feel the happiest man in the world.

It was actually not until he clasped his sweetheart in his arms, with every doubt and suspicion removed, that the consequent pressure of the bomb against his flesh reminded him how in a few more minutes at most it would blow him to atoms.

* * * * *

This story was told me as true by a friend of mine, who knew the interest I take in the subject of suicide. He stopped when he had reached this point in his narrative, as if it were concluded.

"And were they both killed," I asked with interest.

"Oh, no! they were married shortly afterwards. Wilson gave up trying to invent from that night, and became pretty successful when he found his real *forte* —tale writing."

"But the bomb?" I asked. I was not interested in the man's subsequent career.

My friend pretended to look surprised.

"My dear fellow, you don't think a machine could possibly work when Dick Wilson had invented and made it!"

F. REDMAN.

"NOW, Harry," asked the teacher of the juvenile class, "what is the meal we eat in the morning called?"

"Oatmeal," was the little fellow's prompt reply.

LONDON Shoeblack to Innocent Paddy: "Shine your boots, sir?"

Innocent Paddy: "Indade, ye may, sorr!"—and (leaving the shoeblack unpaid)—"Indade, an' the bhoys are very clane an' koind in this part of the counthry!"

TOMMY had announced his intention of going to the swimming-baths, when his mother remarked:

"The paper this morning has an account of a little boy who was drowned while trying to swim."

"Too bad," said Tommy. "I wonder if he is any relation to the poor little boy killed the other day by a 'bus on his way to school?"

"WHAT would our wives say if they knew where we were?" said the captain of a schooner, when they were beating about in a deep fog, fearful of going ashore.

"I shouldn't mind that," growled the mate, "if we only knew where we were ourselves."

THE other day a little boy had his long curls cut off, and was annoyingly reminded of the fact by the remarks of all his friends. Going with his family into the country, soon after his arrival he came running into the house in great sorrow, crying:

"Mamma, mamma, even the hens laugh at me! They all say 'Cut-cut-cut-got-your-hair-cut!'"

The man who wants to shoot with the least trouble and expense should join a Pearson's Rifle Club in his town. Write for particulars to the Secretary, Pearson's Rifle Clubs, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

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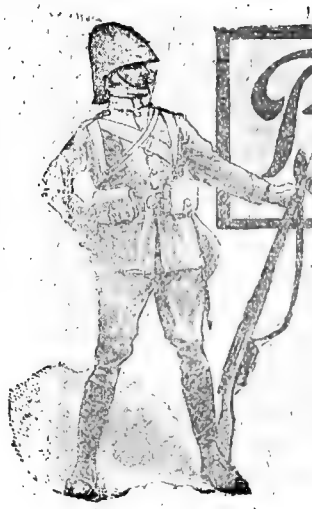

Briton or Boer?

By GEORGE GRIFFITH.

INTRODUCTION.

For years past Britain and the Transvaal have been spoiling for a fight, and it was left to that well-known author, Mr. George Griffith, to write this strong and exciting serial nearly four years ago graphically describing a huge war between the two countries.

The story, coming so soon after the Jameson Raid, was read with unusual interest.

Now that Briton and Boer are in deadly conflict it will be interesting to read the story, and see how far the imagination of the author has actually come true.

CHAPTER XXXVIII. (*continued*).

General Goodenough had meanwhile telegraphed the news of the complete and crushing victory that he had gained to Cape Town and Worcester, announcing his intention of marching on the latter place *via* Houwhoek and Villiersdorp so soon as his men had had proper rest and food.

The first thing that Sir Charles Warren did on receiving these tidings was the exact opposite of what he might have been expected to do. Although the day was going completely in his favour, he suddenly gave orders for the captive balloons to be brought down, the guns of the batteries to be limbered up, and preparations to be made for an immediate retreat on Worcester.

At the same time he gave out the astounding intelligence that the Loyalist force at Caledon had been driven back by overwhelming numbers, and was in full retreat on Cape Town. It was not long before the news reached the Boers through the medium of some prisoners who had been taken during the storming of a krantz, and who made good their escape during the first hurry of the retreat with an ease which, under other circumstances, might have seemed suspicious to them.

The leaders of the Boer commandoes immediately had a conference to discuss the amazing intelligence, and decided to get their men together so soon as possible, to hang on the rear and flanks of the retreating force, and wait until further reinforcements should make them strong enough to venture an attack on Worcester. They also sent mounted messengers across country to meet the victors of Caledon and urge them to join forces before Worcester, so that they might completely hem the Loyalist forces in there, cut them off from their base at Cape Town, and compel a surrender which would practically end the war so far as the South was concerned.

Sir Charles conducted his retreat with all possible order, but still with just sufficient appearance of haste to give the Boers the idea that it really was a retreat and not a feint.

They followed at a respectful distance, making no hostile demonstrations, but carefully closing every avenue of approach to the north, which they now fully believed to be theirs.

They had had such a terrible lesson in the new tactics that none of them had stomach for any more fighting that day, added to which prudence and their natural predilection for fighting their battles with overwhelming odds on their side, convinced them that it was much better to let the enemy fall back unmolested on Worcester, and then catch him between their two armies and crush him at a blow.

As the railways and telegraphs of the South were entirely under the control of the Loyalists, there was no chance of the truth reaching them from the Caledon district until it would be too late for them to escape from the trap that they were walking into, not only without suspicion but in the belief th t, after all, the day had gone in their favour, and that forty-eight hours or so more would see the end of the British power in Cape Colony.

With the exception of Cape Town, Worcester was the last town of importance in the South which remained in possession of the Loyalists, and its fall would probably go far towards deciding the whole war. It would set some forty thousand men free to march on the Free State and catch General Carrington in Bloemfontein between themselves and the Transvaal commandos, and after the surrender or destruction of his force the combined columns would march in overwhelming strength upon Natal. Another Amajuba would be fought, the British Government would surrender as it did before, and the United States of South Africa would become an accomplished fact.

For the sake of preserving the continuity of the action it will be well to state here that, while these events were happening in the South, Kimberley had been re-fortified and garrisoned by a thousand men. The rest, in obedience to orders from Pretoria, had marched back to the Transvaal by way of Bloemhof and Potchefstroom to join General Pretorius at Vereeniging, preparatory to the great concentration of forces on the Natal border by Volksrust, where, as has already been stated, President Kruger and his government had decided to fight the battle which was to decide the mastery of the continent.

General Carrington had meanwhile been establishing himself firmly at Bloemfontein, and had assumed the office, for the time being, of Administrator of the Orange Sovereignty for her Majesty's Government. Captain Murray had taken his armoured train up to within sight of the Transvaal border, and came back with the report that the country was perfectly quiet, and that the Boers had evidently given up the idea of advancing on Bloemfontein,

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as they had blown up the great bridge over the Vaal near Viljoen's Drift.

The next day he received intelligence through his native scouts of the intended concentration of the Boer forces in the south-east. This, of course, produced a corresponding change in his own plans. He telegraphed the information to General Cox at Newcastle, and told him that he would march forthwith with his whole available force on Volksrust, so as to be able to take part in what now fairly promised to be what President Kruger had termed it—the Armageddon of South Africa.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

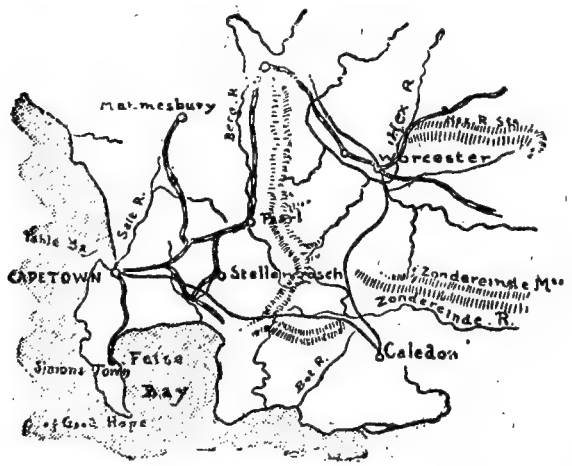
COLLAPSE IN THE SOUTH.

No army ever marched to certain defeat with more certain hopes of victory than did the western section of the rebel burgher forces on Worcester.

Sir Charles Warren conducted his feigned retreat with the same consummate skill that he had planned his whole campaign, and fought his first battle in the war. He took two full days to retire, and whenever the Boers, getting a little impatient, pressed him at all too hard, or seemed inclined to come inconveniently close, they invariably found him in such a position that it would have been an absurdity to attack him—believing, as they did, and as he knew that they did—that if they only let him get far enough they would catch him irretrievably in just the same trap that he had laid for them.

Early on the third day he took his force into Worcester without the loss of a single man or gun, and at once proceeded to dispose it as though he anticipated a regular siege, but meanwhile he detached a force of four thousand men up the line to Tulbagh Pass and Mitchell's Pass to reinforce the garrisons that were holding them, and when this had left he despatched a company of gallopers up the Caledon Road to meet General Goodenough's force, which by this time would be well on the way, and explain the situation to them.

Meanwhile, the Boers came on down through the moun-



tains and into the plain on which Worcester stands encircled by its walls of rugged hills. Not the slightest opposition was offered to their coming, and they were permitted to reconnoitre almost within pistol-range of the earthworks which, in view of such a contingency as this, General Goodenough had caused to be constructed for the defence of the town against attack from the North and East.

The Boers, in the absence of all news from Caledon, which was one of the results of all the horses of the prisoners having been taken away, were so confident that Worcester would be the last stand of the British force, and so determined that there should be no escape from the trap, that they sent off strong detachments to occupy Goudini, Breede Road, and Ceres Road, with a view to cutting off their escape up the line, and this, too, they were allowed to do without the slightest hindrance.

Such complaisance naturally redoubled the confidence of the rebels, and to such extent did this grow that during the afternoon of the third day after the battle of the Hex River they ventured upon what in regular warfare would be called a reconnaisance in force. But this met with such a terribly warm reception that by the time they had had about a thousand men killed and wounded, they decided to wait for the victors of Caledon, and then carry the town with a rush of irresistible numbers.

Every tree, every wall, and every house corner sheltered its man.

About daybreak on the morning of the fourth day, the victors of Caledon really did arrive, though not quite in such shape as the rebels expected. During the night General Goodenough's force had crossed the Breede river and made a detour to the north-east across the railway some four miles below Worcester, and passing across the right flank of the rebel force, which was now in camp in the roughly triangular plain to the north and west of Worcester, had planted three mountain batteries of seven-pounders and Maxim-Nordenfeldts in such a position as to completely rake the only road of retreat now left open to the Boers, that is to say the one back again through the Hex River Pass.

Just after daybreak they heard heavy rifle firing away to the eastward, and simultaneously some of their scouts came in with the news that the British pickets had turned tail and were riding full speed for the shelter of the town, evidently expecting that an attack was about to be made from the Robertson side. Such being the case, it was manifest that the advancing force from which the rifle firing proceeded could be no other than the victorious burghers of the eastern force.

It may be said here that other scouts had started out to bring in correct information as to the character of the newcomers; but these had been promptly cut off, and either captured or shot by specially detailed vedettes of Australian Horse before they had had time to carry their dangerous tidings very many yards.

The result was that the Boers, eager not only to possess Worcester and Tulbagh, which would place Cape Town at their mercy, but also to avenge the rout which they had suffered at the hands of the despised and hated *rooineks*, advanced quickly but with confident stealthiness to a general assault upon the town on its north-western side, fully believing that by the time they got to work their friends and allies would be delivering their assault on the west.

In order that the two assaults might fall as nearly as possible together, they sent written details by well-mounted men to inform their allies of their plan of action, and to urge them to strike quickly and hard. It is almost needless to add that these despatches fell into quite the wrong hands, and that the bearers brought no answer back.

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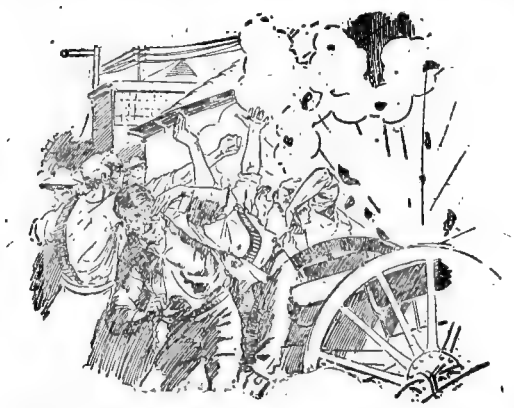
The assault was made by three columns moving in almost parellel directions. As they had no artillery beyond a pair of light mountain guns and three Maxims, which had been brought down from Kimberley, their first and greatest chance of success lay in carrying the town with a rush, and trusting to their rapidity and accuracy of rifle fire.

They were allowed to come within about two hundred



As they were taking aim a shell would come and burst.

yards of the outermost defences towards the north and west before one of the defenders' guns spoke. If they had been better tacticians their leaders would have known that with such men as their adversaries under such a leader as they possessed, this was not by any means an encouraging sign.

But they, accustomed to no other than the irregular guerilla warfare which had served so well in the times of '80 and '81, and totally miscalculating the capacity of the leaders and men with whom they now had to contend, went on with a dogged recklessness, honestly believing that the *rooineks* were afraid of them.

But when they reached the wooded confines of the town they were suddenly and rudely undeceived. Every tree, every wall, and every house corner sheltered its man or men, and then they got such a taste of their own style of warfare as the survivors never forgot to the end of their days.

In a very few minutes it was proved to demonstration that the Cornstalk could shoot every whit as straight as the Afrikander, and, moreover, could handle his rifle a great deal more smartly.

As the heads of the columns came into point blank range, as they were allowed to do, thousands of rifles began to spit out their pale gushes of flame and white smoke in front and on both flanks of them.

They threw out sharpshooters to take cover, but they never reached it, for all the cover was taken, and at every step a man rolled over dead, or with all the fight knocked out of him.

But this was only the beginning.

The three columns, numbering nearly five thousand men each forced their way, though with sadly-diminished ranks, through the first zone of the rifle fire, believing that this was not only the first but the last defence, and confident that in a few minutes more their friends from Caledon would come to the rescue.

Meanwhile not a gun had spoken. They were all in the Central Square, posted so as to command every approach, and as Worcester is built on the rectangular system it is easy to see what this meant. The moment that a body of them had succeeded in fighting its way into one of these streets a storm of shell and machine-gun fire swept along it like a hurricane, and cleared every living thing out of it.

At the same time, too, bugles of an unmistakably British note were ringing out all round the plain and along the mountain sides. Outside the town the battle was raging no less fiercely than inside.

Under cover of the mountain batteries which General Goodenough had so skilfully planted, a brigade of the Austra ian Horse, four thousand strong, had fought its way across the railway, and a troop of the Cape Artillery Volunteers, following close in their rear, had planted their Maxims so as to sweep the line.

But while this was being done the Boers had stormed the railway station, which is a considerable distance to the westward of the town, and planted their two seven-pounder mountain guns so as to command the up and down lines, and had at the same time advanced their three Maxims up towards Worcester with the intention of cutting off the retreat of the British after they should have been driven out.

The fire from the mountain batteries was now turned exclusively on the station, and as the amateur rebel artillerists had never been under shell fire before their first disastrous experience in the Hex River, they found the working of their guns a somewhat embarrassing experience.

Just as they were taking a nice steady aim an untimely shell would come and burst within a yard or two of them, and by the time a new relay of gunners came to take up their suddenly abandoned task, another one would come and turn the air about them into a sudden mist of fire, filled with sharp angled fragments of iron which it was quite impossible to dodge.

Presently, to the dismay of the survivors at the station, the columns which had gone into Worcester began to come out again sadly thinned in numbers and lacking in order, and after them came troop after troop of foot, and horse, and artillery, and down from the hillsides, and out from the eastern end of the valley there came other troops, and before they well had time to grasp what had happened, the artillery unlimbered, Maxims and Nordenfeldts were brought up into position at a gallop, and out of a wide crescent of flame and smoke a converging hurricane of shot and shell swept down upon the station building and their two guns, while tempests of machine-gun bullets

The Capetown Highlanders went in with the bayonet.

were rained upon the retreating columns as they fought and struggled on their way towards the fatal Tulbagh Pass.

Then the artillery storm stopped as suddenly as it had opened, and like a storm of another sort the Australian and Canadian Horse swept down and finished the work,

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capturing both the Maxims and the seven-pounders before their unskilled gunners had had time to fire a hundred shots. One of the columns—that which had entered the town from the north—wheeled round and made a desperate effort to fight its way back by the Hex River, but it was assailed by charge after charge of the Mounted Infantry, and just as it was on the point of breaking up, the Cape Town Highlanders and the Hampshire Regiment went in with the bayonet and completed the ruin.

All that now remained of the rebel force that had attacked Worcester was by this time in full retreat towards Tulbagh and Ceres, which, in fact, was now the only road open to them, for to the south were the Breede river, the wastes of the Southern Karoo and the mighty wall of the Drachenstein Mountains, and to the east and north were the victorious British forces with their irresistible superiority in artillery.

They still hoped in a dull sort of way that they could reach the almost inaccessible fastnesses of the Winterhoek and Witzenberg Mountains, and hold Tulbagh and Mitchell's Passes against any force that the British leaders could bring against them, until the Transvaal and the Free State came to their aid, or, at least, crushed the *rooineks* in another Amajuba, in which case, of course, the British Government would come down on its knees as it did before, and beg them to accept all that they wanted.

But by nightfall they knew that they had only been driven into yet another trap, for the detachments that they had thrown out up the line in the morning came back to tell them that both the Passes were occupied by British artillerists and the dreaded sailormen from the ships at Cape Town.

Still they pressed on fighting a running fight with a dogged courage that was not untinged by despair until darkness came down, and, by making aim impossible, silenced the almost incessant fire of the guns.

By this time their main body had reached the green and fertile Tulbagh Basin, and here wearied men and horses thought that at least there would be a respite from slaughter.

But Sir Charles Warren was not the man to let a defeated foe stop running when he had once got him on the run. Half-a-dozen field search lights had been brought up by train with the heavier guns from Worcester, and an hour or so after dark the long white beams of light began to sweep the floor of the Basin from as many points of vantage, and where the light fell shells presently began to burst, and the hail-storms from the machine-guns to fall, and under cover of the fire and the lights—most effective cover of all—the British and Colonial troops moved up nearer and nearer through the darkness, seeing without being seen.

And then ere long the inevitable happened. The Boers, dazzled and bewildered by the electric beams, broken up by the shell fire and mown down in scores by the bullet storms, at last lost both heart and nerve and began to cry for quarter. They were no longer even an irregular force. They were a rabble without leaders, in which each man fought for his own hand till he had fired away his last cartridge, or threw away his rifle and sought shelter or surrendered as his courage or his fear made him.

All night firing went on in different parts of the wide-extended field, and all night parties of disarmed rebels either came in or were brought in to the headquarters at Tulbagh station to submit to the mercy of their conquerors. But when morning dawned and the two or three thousand rebels who were still under arms realised the utter hopelessness of their position, they with one accord walked out of the shelters they had taken and surrendered unconditionally.

Thus ended the revolt of the Cape burghers upon which the enemies of British rule in South Africa had counted so much. Vastly superior in numbers, they had been played with, delayed in their movements, out-generalled by superior skill, and at last decoyed into a hopeless trap in which their numbers merely meant more slaughter. As the Sepoys had done in the Indian Mutiny, they reckoned without the unconquerable grit of the Englishman, and the incomparable skill of the English officer when he is in a really tight place.

More than this they had forgotten, or never knew, that there were thousands of Englishmen born under other suns than England's who were willing and ready to cross

A party of four was standing on the top of Timeball Hill.

thousands of miles of sea, and to fight and die for the honour of the old flag rather than see a shred torn from it by such hands as theirs.

As at Caledon, the leaders when found were put under arrest and sent down to Cape Town, the weapons and horses of the rank and file were taken away and they were told to go about their business and behave themselves. The victorious forces were then moved down to the capital, a garrison of five thousand men was left in Cape Town, and the remainder of the British and Colonial troops were embarked in the transports, which two days later steamed out of Table Bay *en route* for Durban to join the Army of Natal, and take part in what bade fair to be the final struggle on the old battlefields of '81.

CHAPTER XL.

From Pretoria to Westminster

On the morning of the 25th of February, between ten and eleven, a party of four was standing on the top of Timeball Hill on the southern confines of Pretoria, overlooking the pretty, pleasantly-situated seat of government of the South African Republic, surrounded by its guardian hills and shaded by its groves and avenues of trees.

It was here that, in the old times of the English occupation, the Timeball, which marked the official hour after noon, had been situated, but it had long since been removed as a relic of abominable tyranny. Here the Prince and Princess Regna, Mr. Secretary Leyds and Baron de Matalha were standing on the eve, as it were, of the crisis of the Republic's fate, discussing things past, present, and to come.

Materially speaking, they were also standing on the rampart of a well-constructed and heavily-armed fort. A little to their left, across the Apies River, rose the conical kopje known as the Artillery Camp, now also a fort. To the right stretched away a double range of steeply scarped hills with a wide rolling plain between them, and here, too, preparations had been made for the speedy instalment of mountain batteries.

In front of them to the northward were the lower ridges of the Meintjes Hill, and, towering above these the rugged heights of the Magaliesberg, broken by a deep cleft. On Meintjes Hill, too, there were forts, and concerning all these forts there was a curious fact well known to all the party—their fighting faces were turned towards the town.

After many denials as to the very existence of these

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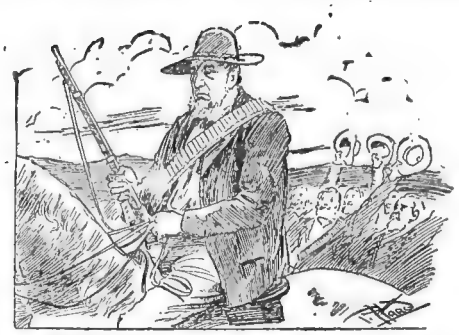
structures on the part of the Government and its hired press, it had at length been admitted that certain fortifications were being constructed "for the defence of the seat of government." But now that they were actually in existence it was easy to see that their true object was to make Pretoria untenable by an invading force until every one of the five forts was silenced or captured. Not less than a quarter of a million had been spent in their construction and arming,



The President had taken his rifle and mounted his horse.

nearly every penny of which had found its way into German pockets—and after all the German squadron had not found its way into Delagoa Bay.

Pretoria was almost empty of troops save for the garrisons of the forts, and the sentries who patrolled the pavements round the Government building and the principal points of the town. All the available forces, including strong detatchments of artillery and the German-drilled, uniformed troops which had been raised under the name of police, had several days ago left for the south-east, and with them nearly all the chief men of Pretoria had gone.

The old President himself had kept the promise which he had made to the council of State. He had taken his rifle and mounted his horse, and ridden out at the head of his burghers to lead them to the battle which was to decide the fate of his country and his people. With all his faults and deficiencies, mortal and intellectual, there was no braver man, and certainly there was no more pathetic a figure that day south of the Zambesi than Paul Kruger, the Voortrekker, and now in good truth Father of his People.

In the hour of destiny he had discarded alike the shiny broadcloth and tall hat, which had ever given him the look of an ill-dressed funeral mute, and the smart brougham in which he had been wont to ride in a travesty of state, surrounded by his armed policeman.

Booted and spurred, in shirt and riding-breeches and jacket, with a well-filled bandolier across his broad chest, and a wide-brimmed slouch-hat on his grey head, he had ridden out, sitting his horse in spite of his unwieldy bulk with the easy seat of one who had spent many a hard day in the saddle, and with the firm resolve in his stout old heart to come back a conqueror and head of an independent Sovereign State, or to find a grave under the shadow of the great, flat-topped hill on which lay the bones of the last English General who had essayed the conquest of his country.

They had been talking of this as they surveyed the pleasant and peaceful scene beneath them, and, in spite of the fact that each of them, or at least three of them, had thoughts carefully hidden from the others, they had talked of it with genuine admiration.

"Whether he comes back victor or prisoner of war," the Baron was saying, "the President will at least have won a place in history; but in any case he will be the last of his kind, the last representative of patriarchial government in the civilised world."

"Are you not forgetting our Little Father, the Tsar, Baron?" said the Princess with a faint note of satire in her voice. "Ah, I wonder what his Majesty is doing now, and whether all the Russian squadron was captured on that fatal day in Delagoa Bay."

At these last words the Secretary, who was looking nearly ten years older than he had done two months before, raised his eyebrows and looked round sharply.

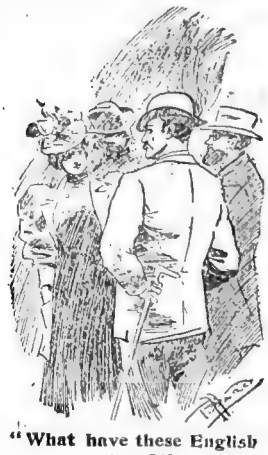
"May I ask whether Your Highness has still any hope that news of the situation as it was then may after all have got to Europe in time?"

"There is the possibility," said the Prince, replying for his daughter. "But even if it did," he went on, speaking not only gravely but with obvious sincerity, "I am afraid I should be misleading you if I held out any hopes of armed European intervention now. You may be quite sure that news of every success that has been so unexpectedly and, I am compelled by the facts to say, brilliantly gained by the English and their Australian and Canadian allies has by this time passed over the wires of the world.

"There is nothing that succeeds like success, you know. Had matters gone the other way at the first, Russia and her allies would, as I promised you, most undoubtedly have used force to prevent England exerting her full strength to deprive you of the fruit of your victories. But were they to use it now to deprive the English here of what they have won in the face of most adverse circumstances, the rest of Europe, and probably America as well, would turn upon them. Personally, I believe that the Anglo-Saxon race would rise the whole world over and fight to the last gasp rather than permit such a thing to be done."

"There I quite agree with you," said the Baron, smiling with an air of bland innocence which would have made it impossible for the acutest observer to have guessed how much he knew of the true inwardness and causes of those first fatal successes, "but I suppose you still believe with me that if the second battle of Amajuba has the same result as the first, Europe will not permit England to snatch the fruits of victory by main force from our good President and his valiant burghers."

"That also the world would not tolerate!" exclaimed the Secretary before the Prince had time to reply. "And, after all, it is then that we shall want the moral and material help of Europe, rather than now. What have these English and their black and white allies done, when you come to think of it? They have defeated one or two of our smaller commandoes. Carrington has taken Bloemfontein and annexed the Free State, but we have taken Kimberley and all the important inland towns to the South, and thousands of the Free State burghers have crossed the frontier and joined us rather than submit again to the English rule.



"What have these English done?"

"What has happened in the South we do not and cannot know yet, but you will see that the day after to-morrow, if not earlier, our friends in the Cape will take the English in the rear while we attack them in the front, and if they do that there will be little fear of the result. Mark my words—within a week the English Government will be on its knees again, and in a month Paul Krüger will be President of the United States of South Africa."

"And in a few more months his successor after him," added the Princess, smiling her sweetest and inclining her

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head with a slight but graceful gesture towards the Secretary.

The Doctor's sallow cheeks flushed slightly as he acknowledged the flattering forecast, and the Baron, rubbing his hands gently together, added:

"And then, I suppose, we shall see the dawn of the new era for Africa, when her gold and diamonds shall be transmuted into iron and steel, when her sea-ports shall be arsenals and her fleets of war and peace shall command the highways of the south and east. What a future there might be for such a country as this, inhabited by such a people, and united under a single wise and strong government! Ah! it must be a pleasant prospect for you, Mr. Secretary. It will be no mean *rôle* to play, that of the Man of Destiny for South Africa."

Curiously enough, as the Baron spoke, there was one name in the minds of all four of them, and that was not the name of the Batavian adventurer, who aspired to the dominion of half a continent. It was the name of a man who, six thousand miles away in England, was just then bringing about the very end that Prince Paul had predicted; for Cecil Rhodes had come back and faced the music—and the music had suddenly grown dumb.

As he strode on to the stage of English politics the yelping snarl of the little Englander had died away into a whine, half of fear and half of apology, and those who had looked big enough when he was far away spending his millions, risking his life, and doing his work in silence, looked very small indeed when they essayed to stand beside him.

Then, when their whinings had died into silence, his long-stilled voice had rung out strong and true. From a score of platforms throughout the country he pointed with one hand to the gallant band of men who, as all England then believed, were fighting with their backs to the wall against overwhelming odds for one of the most priceless possessions and fairest ornaments to the British Crown, and with the other to the political cravens who had betrayed the traditions of a thousand years, and backed down to a foreign menace.

So far England had been silent, but silent with an evergrowing uneasiness and sense of personal and national shame. But when this man—who, with the means at command of buying every indulgence and luxury, and every shape of purchasable honour that nineteenth century civilisation had to sell, had forsaken all for the sake of his high Imperial ideal, and gone to take his place on one of the war-swept outposts of the Empire—spoke out and told her the lesson he had wrought, then England woke and asked herself who those were who had robbed her of her ancient strength, and placed this blot upon her ancient honour.

And then she, too, spoke out in her righteous wrath, and Europe heard her voice ring out echoed by a reveillé that rolled round the world from post to post along the bulwarks which stretch away eastward till East becomes West and westward till West becomes East again. Like magic a new party, whose elements had long been growing and taking shape, sprang into existence with all that was strong and honourable in the nation behind it, and at the head of this party stood the man of action who had come to save England from the plague and dry-rot of words.

On both sides of the House of Commons there stood up men who had but needed such a leadership to fling party considerations to the winds and devote themselves honestly, if tardily, to the task of proving that the Mother of Nations could still wield the strength that had made her great.

From both the Conservative and the Radical benches, from above and below the Gangway, there came a steady, clear-voiced demand for the policy of the Government to be submitted to the tribunal of the hustings, and this demand was echoed from end to end of the country by such unmistakable thunders of coming storm that ministers at last, individually by no means sorry for release from an impossible and shameful position, resigned their portfolios and went into the country.

When some of them came back it was to find that the old party lines had been swept away, and that one great and united Imperial Party so completely overshadowed all others that they were but little groups and factions of cranks and faddists in comparison with it, and the first official act of the British premiership of Cecil John Rhodes was to inform the House of Commons, amidst the applause of the whole nation, that all the available naval and military resources of the Empire would immediately be devoted to giving the

"These English are, after all, a wonderful race!"

only practicable and honourable answer that could be given to the arrogant and unwarrantable menaces of Russia, France, and Germany, and by a singular and momentous coincidence, this speech was, allowing for the difference in time, delivered on the eve of the 27th of February, the second Amajuba Day, while the Briton and the Boer, massed in their thousands and armed to the teeth, were lying camped on the veld and the hillside, waiting for the sun to rise over the field of Africa's Armageddon.

CHAPTER XLI.

Plain Words from the Princess.

After an interesting, if not very profitable, day spent in an excursion round Pretoria, an examination of its elaborate and expensive defences, Prince and Princess Regna and the Baron returned to a quiet and comfortable dinner in the same room at the Grand Hotel in which, not very long before, Mr. Secretary Leyds had received the news of the beginning of troubles for the South African Republic in the tidings of the revolt of the Outlanders in Johannesburg and the rising of the native population.

If the truth must be told, neither the Prince nor the Princess were in the very best of spirits, albeit that their training in the ways of diplomacy and society made it comparatively easy for them to hide the true inwardness of their mental state behind a mask of cheerful cordiality and careless *insouciance*, which would have deceived anyone less penetrating and less well-informed than their guest.

As for the Baron, he was just as suave and smiling and cheerful as they had ever known him to be, and yet there was something in his manner—an undefinable *soupçon* of mastery—which might almost have been called superiority, which instinctly warned both the astute and practised diplomatist and the daughter who was the worthy heiress of his talents that, stowed away somewhere in that capacious head of his, there was a clear knowledge of facts at which they, with all their educated cleverness, could only make approximate guesses.

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The dinner itself, served, as usual, by the deft Dmitri, had been seasoned only by conversation which, under the circumstances, might have been called commonplace—academic discussions of the military and diplomatic pros and cons of the situation, and interesting, if profitless estimates of the characters of the various actors who were playing leading *rôles* in the tragedy which was to culminate not many hours later.

But when Dmitri had retired and the stage which is pleasantest in all dinners was reached—the stage of the walnuts and the wine, which merges imperceptibly into the condition of coffee and cigarettes—then each of the trio became conscious, from many an apparent trifle in the conversation that had proceeded, that something like a battle of wits was to begin.

Whether by good luck or good management, it had

"There will never be a United States of South Africa."

happened that Mr. Secretary Leyds had found so much business of State awaiting him on his return from the excursion that it was quite impossible for him to accept the somewhat anxiously-awaited invitation to make one of the party. But, be that as it may, the conversation soon took such a turn as seemed to indicate that his room formed a perfectly satisfactory substitute for his company.

"These English are, after all, a wonderful race," said Prince Paul, leaning back in his chair, and blowing a thin blue stream of cigarette smoke out in little puffs, as though by way of punctuation, as Dmitri softly closed the door behind him, and straightway went about his master's business.

"There is no denying that, even from the point of view of their hereditary enemies, among whom, I suppose, I may count myself, there certainly seems to be something in them which, at the last moment, when their confusion and overthrow seems certain, suddenly asserts itself, and turns the best-laid schemes of international diplomacy into failure.

"It was so in the old times of the Armada, when Philip of Spain was on the point of making himself master of Europe. So again after Austerlitz, when Napoleon was almost master of the world. So, too, again in India; but there, the question of to-day is: 'Is it going to be the same thing in Africa?' What is your opinion, *mon cher* Baron?"

The Princess removed the slender yellowish-brown covered cigarette of the finest Russian tobacco from her dainty lips, and as the little wreaths of grey-blue smoke escaped from between them, she leant her elbow on the table, and, with the cigarette poised between her fingers, looked at the jovial countenance of the Baron with an eloquent note of interrogation in each of her lovely eyes.

The Baron, who, by special permission, was smoking an excellent Muria from the Prince's own cabinet, also leant back in his chair and drew a long, silent, luxurious whiff and looked up at the ceiling after the fashion of a skilful general, who takes care not to expose his forces to the heaviest batteries of the enemy. Then he removed his cigar and sent a long, curling stream of smoke up in the direction of his gaze, which, presently slanting like a downward flash across the Princess's line of sight, stopped suddenly and caught the Prince full in the eyes.

"My dear Prince," he said with a little wave of the hand that held the cigar, "compliments apart, I would a great deal sooner sit and hear you talk than be constrained to answer you, for what you say is so much more instructive, and, I may be permitted to add, entertaining, than anything that I could say in answer to it. You have touched, it seems to me, upon the greatest of all the problems of history: Why should one race rather than another be predestined, as it were, to fill the greatest place in the history of a given age?

"Why should these English, as you call them, who four hundred years ago were an insignificant people inhabiting a few small islands in an intemperate clime, have carved out for themselves an empire which now covers two-fifths of the lands of the earth? Why should they have had their Drakes and Raleighs, their Clives and Wolfes, their Wellingtons and Nelsons? Why should they have been able to singe the King of Spain's beard in Cadiz, and to draw that thin red line across the field of Waterloo which barred Napoleon's way to empire? Why——?"

"Because," said the Princess, suddenly dropping the hand which held her cigarette upon the table, "their women are the mothers of men. Because," she went on, with cheeks that flushed and eyes that sparkled in spite of her habitual self-control, "their sons are the men who stormed the heights of Alma, who made the charge at Balaclava, who fought us one to ten at Inkerman and beat us, and I, a Russian, say it."

Both the Prince and the Baron stared at her in unfeigned astonishment, and the Baron at least thought that he never seen a beautiful woman look so beautiful as she did just at that moment. She glanced rapidly from one to the other, and then went on, speaking with, if possible, a still more eloquent ring in her voice:

"Yes, it is so, unpatriotic and all as it may sound for me to say it. At home they may have feeble governments, divided counsels, and what we should call traitors in their highest places, but abroad they are men and heroes. Look what they have done here in Africa. When the President made his proclamation at Krugersdorp, it seemed as though they would have been swept into the sea within a month. A little more than two months have passed. They are victors all along the line.

"We know, and you too know, Baron, that they have crushed the rebellion in the Cape, smothered it in Natal, snatched victory out of the burning ruins of Johannesburg, stormed the strongest town save this in the interior, drawn ships and men and arms over thousands of miles of sea, and at this moment they are confronting the forces which were to have overwhelmed them with forces of equal or greater strength.

"It needs men to do work like that, and these English are men, and that is the answer to your question, my father, and yours, Monsieur le Baron."

"I am afraid that would not be very pleasant hearing for our friend the State Secretary," murmured the Baron with a twinkle in his bright, alert eyes, and a pleasant smile on his mobile lips.

"Pah!" said the Princess, flicking the ash off her cigarette with a gesture eloquent of scorn. "That moustachioed popinjay! Fancy such a man—if one may use such a word in such a relation—aspiring to rule where the English have reigned! Why could he not see that without the Boers he was nothing, and that if he did not win their trust and confidence he would be something less than nothing? That brave old man, impossible animal as he is, taught him a lesson the other day when he took his rifle and rode out to fight his last fight.

"But instead of learning it he stops here spinning his paltry spider-webs of amateur diplomacy under the guns of

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forts that should have had their faces turned the other way. These Boers may be ignorant and pig-headed as the animal whose name sounds like theirs, but they know a man who can fight from the man who can only scheme and plot in the dark. No, there will never be a United States of South Africa, and if there could be Mr. Secretary Leyds would never rule them. One might as well imagine a Jew Johannesburg millionaire as President, a mountebank crowned with a cap and bells and with a stick and bladder as sceptre!"

"You are somewhat bitter to-night, my daughter," said the Prince, looking at her with half-closed eyes. "If I did not know you have a perfect digestion I should have thought that the Secretary's lunch had disagreed with you—or was it, perchance, the Secretary himself?"

"I think you may say the Secretary," she replied, with just a tinge of acidity in her tone. "We came here to seek a man who, at the least, might have been expected to be a capable instrument. We have found an aspiring bungler who has made such mistakes—mistakes so colossal that their corresponding successes ought to have given him the empire of the world. Who but the most arrant of bunglers could have mismanaged matters so that that detestable English fleet should have been permitted to strike its heaviest blow at the weakest place in his armour?"

Here the Baron smiled approvingly, and in his inner thoughts he pictured to himself that solitary watcher standing on Reuben Point, looking through his field-glasses as Mr. Michael Ostroff's yacht steamed out past Inyack Island on the morning of the 16th of December, and of a certain brief code message which had flashed through the cables up and down the coast a few minutes afterwards.

"Then you are of opinion, Princess," he said after another puff at his cigar, "that the dream, or rather let us say the ideal, of Africa for the Afrikander is not destined to be immediately realised?"

While he was saying this the Prince had been looking at his daughter with the half-vexed, half-amused air of one who recognises that the Fates are against him, and doesn't very much care that they are. She read his thoughts instantly, as no other could have done, and replied to the Baron with a pretty air of careless resignation:

"Yes, that is my opinion, and, my father, I think you will allow me to say it is yours too eh? Is not that so?"

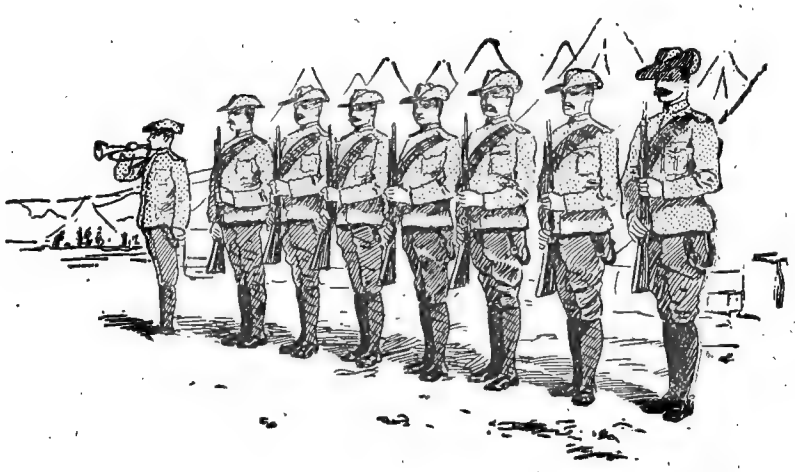
"Yes," said the Prince with something like a drawl, "I suppose it is. To be frank for once, that is to say to enjoy a sensation which is refreshing from its novelty, as we are all in a sense conspirators here, it may be admitted that our good friend the Baron holds the winning cards, always supposing that President Kruger does not put down the ace of trumps the day after to-morrow. In which case," he went on smiling blandly at the Baron, who smiled just as blandly in return, "we should still be in pretty much the same boat, as the English say."

"Exactly," was the quiet reply. "I should be far from questioning the fact that a diplomatist of such genius and experience as yourself, my dear host, could fail to know as much, we will say, of what I have thought it advisable to do, as I know of what the faithful servant of the Tsar has sought to do. I hope I may say without offence that whatever advantage may rest now, or hereafter, with my side will be due to the fact that it has been my good fortune to work with the best of all possible materials—which is only another and more clumsy way of putting what the Princess said so eloquently just now."

"Yes," said the Princess, throwing off the last shred of diplomatic disguise, "you, Baron, have worked with men; we have worked with machines. *Voila tout!*"

"But the day after to-morrow it will be a battle not only of men but of machines as well," said the Prince, "and on the outcome of that everything depends. It is no harm, nay, it is just as well, that we should each understand the other's position. We have spoken, I trust, not only as diplomatists but as gentlemen, and now, my dear Baron, what liqueur will you take?"

(To be continued.)



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SHORT STORIES ABOUT PEOPLE.

We devote, every week, two pages of *Short Stories* to pithy, humourous anecdotes similar to those which appear in these columns. A prize of £1 1s. will be sent to the reader who submits the best storyette this week, and a copy of "Lady Jezebel," by Fergus Hume, to each of those whose attempts are used. The anecdotes may be either original or selected; in the latter case the source *must* be stated. The prize of One Guinea offered for the best Storyette in this competition has been won this week by Mr. H. Knight, of Mitre Farm, Scrubbs Lane, Willesden Junction, N.W. Attempts for this week's prize must deal with FUNNY STORIES ABOUT TRAMPS, and must reach the Storyette Editor, *Short Stories* Office, Henrietta Street, Strand, London, W.C., by Monday, June 4th, Post-cards only, please.

A New Remedy.

ABOUT ten o'clock one morning two men met and began threatening and calling each other names. One finally called the other a liar, and the two were about to grapple when a woman opened the door and said:

"Gentlemen, are you about to fight?"

"We are!" they answered together.

"Then have the kindness to wait a moment," she continued. "My husband has been ill for weeks, and is now just able to sit up. He is very downhearted this morning; and if you'll only wait till I can draw him up to the window, I know he'll be very grateful to both of you."

She disappeared into the house, and, after one look into each other's faces, the men smiled, shook hands, and departed together. H. K.

Ice that Kept a Long Time.

A CERTAIN churchwarden, who was a zealous advocate for the cause of temperance, one hot summer's day employed a carpenter to make some alteration in his dining-room. In repairing a corner near the fireplace, it was found necessary to remove the wainscot, when lo! a "treasure trove" was brought to light which astonished the workman most marvellously.

A brace of decanters, sundry bottles—all containing "something to take"—a jug, and tumblers, were cosily reposing there in snug quarters.

The joiner, with wonder-stricken countenance, ran to the proprietor with the intelligence.

"Well, I declare!" exclaimed the churchwarden. "That is curious, to be sure. Old Captain Brown must have left those things there when he occupied the premises thirty years ago."

"Perhaps he did, sir," returned the discoverer; "but that ice in the jug must have been well frozen to have remained solid so long a time."

E. A. C.

She'd Have a Strong Arm.

A GENTLEMAN was trying a horse one day in company with the owner, a professional jockey. Having driven him a mile or two, the gentleman, who noticed that he pulled pretty hard, requiring constant watching and a steady rein, said:

"Do you think that is just the horse for a lady to drive?"

"Well, sir," answered the jockey, "I must say I shouldn't want to marry the woman that could drive that horse!" R. B.

Would Your Position Require It?

"WE have spared no expense to make the place perfectly lovely and up-to-date," explained Mrs. de Cashe as she ostentatiously displayed the rings on her fingers while conducting the poor relation round the house and grounds.

"So I observe," murmured the relation abashed.

"Now this part of the grounds is reserved for the amusement of the children," continued Mrs. de Cashe. "We keep these fowls for my 'usband's 'obby. They are real Brahmas; we bought the eggs specially from Mr. Brahma and 'atched them out ourselves."

"Do they lay every day?" the relative ventured to ask.

"They could do so, of course," replied the wealthy lady, rather huffed. "But you forget that our position is such as to render that quite unnecessary, and we can afford to let them please themselves!"

And so they did!

I. N. E.

Oh, Those English!

A LONDON lady, walking in Florence, missed her purse. The suspicious movements of a man in front made her boldly demand the stolen property. Too amazed to refuse, the thief actually handed over the purse.

Indignant at such broad-day robbery, the lady stopped an elegantly-dressed gentleman, and, in excited tones, began to pour out her grievance.

Merely waiting to hear "that man stole my purse," the gallant Italian rushed after the thief, who promptly took to his heels.

They had a good run before the thief could dodge his pursuer. The sun of a summer day did not help the polite Florentine to keep cool; so, red-faced and out of breath, he turned back to meet the English lady with profuse apologies.

"Madam, I am very, very sorry. I did my best, but your purse is gone."

"Oh, no!" she replied sweetly, "I have my purse; I got it back from the man."

"Got your purse back! What did you want then?"

"Want! Why, I want justice."

It was too much, even for the proverbial Italian urbanity, and, almost choking with sudden wrath, he gasped out:

"Justice! To think that I should have run myself in a perspiration for Justice!"

M. A.

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Very Poor Playing.

A WELL-KNOWN organist once went to a distant country town to give an organ recital in a new church. The organ-blower was a stout old man, who evidently felt all the importance of his own share of the proceeding.

He confided to a friend a fear that he might not be able to give the great player wind enough, and the friend encouraged him as well as he could. When the recital was over he approached the friend and asked, "Is that really Mr. Jones?"

"Yes," he replied.

"Humph! It doesn't seem to me that he's sich a great player as they makes out."

"Why not?"

"Well, sir, he doesn't use no more wind than the gent what plays here every Sunday."

K. H.

Abusing a Duke.

THE Duke of Norfolk is exceedingly fond of relating the following tale:

He entertained an excursion party from London some twelve hundred strong, at Arundel, and presided over the dinner. Before dinner an amusing incident occurred. Warnings to keep off the grass were much in existence and were much obeyed. One person, in a soft felt hat and reefer jacket, was observed crossing the sward.

"Come off the grass!" said a woman sharply. "'Tis the likes of you that gets poor people a bad name. Can't you see it's forbidden?"

The person went on smiling, but the woman's surprise was laughable to see when she found at the dinner she had been abusing the Duke himself.

How They Educate Boys.

ONE cannot be surprised at the slow progress of education in certain parts of the United States, when a visitor to Arkansas recently heard a rural school-teacher say to his pupil:

"Come, come, you boys, can't you sit up a little more erecter?"

And when a tardy pupil came in and left the door slightly ajar, the teacher said sharply:

"You go back and shev that there door shet!" after which he said apologetically to the visitor:

"I try to learn 'em manners, but it's tremendous uphill work." J. C. T.

The Driver Didn't Pay Toll.

AN Irishman, who traded in small ware, kept a donkey-cart, with which he visited the different villages. On one occasion he came to a bridge where a toll was levied.

He found to his disappointment he had not enough money to pay it.

A bright thought struck him. He unharnessed the donkey and put it into the cart. Then getting between the shafts himself, he pulled the cart with the donkey standing in it on to the bridge.

In due course he was hailed by the toll-collector.

"Hey, man," cried the latter, "whaur's your toll?"

"Begorra," said the Irishman, "just ask the droiver."

Hopping.

AMONGST the poor East-enders who went down hopping last season to a village in Kent, was an old woman who had lost a leg.

When she had finished her shopping one Saturday night, she asked the grocer if he would wait for the money until she had done hopping, to which he readily agreed.

When, however, at the end of the season, he saw her stumping by the shop, he rushed out, saying:

"Now, then, missus, come and pay your bill."

"Not yet awhile," she said with a grin, as she proceeded on her way, "you can see plain enough that I ain't done hopping yet." S. W.

What He Was Working For.

"It's mighty busy ye are, Mike!" exclaimed his friend Brady, lounging against the ramshackle counter of the little bootmaker's shop. "Ye seem to have plenty of jobs in hand, and ye're workin' at 'em as though tomorrow was the beginning of eternity and ye wanted to finish up before ye went."

"Whist! Don't shtop me!" cried Mike. "Oi want to finish these as quick as Oi can; if Oi don't make haste, sure Patsy Malone will be back before Oi'm done."

"What's he got to do wid it, Mike?" asked Brady. "Oi thought ye was bound over to keep the peace wid Malone. Twinty shillin's, wasn't it?"

"Yis, that's what Oi'm working so hard for!"

"How's that?"

"Whin Oi've done these jobs Oi'll have saved twinty shillin's, and, be jabers! Oi don't want Malone to come back before Oi'm ready to pay a foine, for Oi mean to break the peace as soon as Oi set eyes on him!"

And he worked away with redoubled energy.

M. W.

Improved That Piano.

ENTERING a music shop the other day, a Welsh miner, who had lately come into a considerable sum of money, asked the price of a grand piano. He was told it was fifty pounds.

He bought it.

A fortnight after he returned for a music book, and the shopman asked him if the instrument gave satisfaction.

"Man," he said, "you wouldn't know it now. It just looks splendid! My old 'ooman has painted it yeller to match the chest of drawers!" T. O'B.

A Generous Tip.

A CERTAIN minister lecturing on his visit to the Holy Land, said while he was there he went into the King's gardens. As he was coming out again he thought he would give the guard at the gate a tip, and taking a coin out of his purse he offered it to him.

To his surprise, however, the guard would not have it, and he had to take it back again.

When he got back to his guide he said:

"I have been in the King's gardens and I offered the guard this coin, but he would not have it. How much is it worth?"

On seeing the coin the guide laughed and said:

"Why it takes four to make a halfpenny."

M. A. M.

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PLAYING FOR LIFE.

It used to be said of Harry Morton that the only good point about him was his love of music. His father was a very wealthy man who had gained his money by shrewd, yet daring, business speculation—a man of considerable intelligence and force of character; Harry was the only child and his father had set great hopes upon his becoming a brilliant man, but in this he had been disappointed.

Mr. Morton left out of his calculations—which was rather strange for such a man—the fact that his son would not have the same incentive as himself; he had been poor, Harry was born to riches.

Harry Morton grew up careless and rather indolent; he had plenty of money and it seemed to him that his sole object in life was to spend that money. He did nothing in particular at school, and when he left the university he travelled hither and thither, in various parts of the world, enjoying himself to the full. Yet it must be stated to his credit that he was not bad and did nothing dishonourable.

He had the gift of music in no small degree, his favourite instrument being the violin. He could play that as only a few people could ever hope to do. He gave a lot of money for an old violin which was said to be a "Strad,"—perhaps it was, but expert opinion was divided on the subject. This violin he carried with him wherever he went.

The last journey on which the violin accompanied him was a tour in Greece. He had not "done" the land of Hellenes and it occurred to him that this would be a desirable way of spending a few weeks. It was on this journey that an adventure befel him which made his "Strad" more dear to him than ever—a companion never to be parted with while he lived.

Having seen the sights of Athens and other well-known parts of the country, he followed his usual custom of plunging into the less frequented districts. "Seeing the native article," he called it, and it gave him pleasure to astonish them by ordering all sorts of things which he knew they could not supply and "making a dust" generally.

He did this one evening in a lonely village in which he found himself at sunset. He wanted shelter for the night, and he applied to the owner of what appeared to be an inn for a supper and a bed. The place was little more than a hovel and by no means so clean as it ought to have been, but Morton had had to put up with this kind of thing on several occasions and he was prepared to do the same now. He had picked up some words and phrases of the language and was able to make himself understood sufficiently for his purpose.

In reply to his request, the host, who had been lounging at the door, ushered him into a small room, and bade him be seated while the meal and the bed were being got ready.

The man, although not exactly prepossessing in appearance, was not a bad-looking fellow and was apparently quite won over by the gift of a cigar of an excellent brand. He looked perplexed at first when Morton detailed the kind of supper he wished to have, and then he smiled.

"Does the gentleman suppose that such viands are to be obtained in this poor place?" he asked in a mixture of Greek and bad French.

"Oh, you speak French, do you? Well, get me the best supper you can; I can afford to pay for it. And let the bed be clean and comfortable," said Morton in French.

The man promised to do his best and retired. Harry, left to himself, puffed thoughtfully at his cigar and allowed his mind to wander far from his present surroundings.

The supper that was brought to him was not particularly to his liking although it may have been the best that the man could procure; but Morton was decidedly hungry and this enabled him to enjoy it far more than some of his fastidious London friends would have believed.

He ate the supper in solitude, listening now and again to the sounds of voices which came from another room. He could distinguish that these were the voices of his host, a woman and a girl or younger

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woman; the words were not sufficiently distinct for him to catch many of them, and his knowledge of the language was so limited that even those which he did hear were of little value in indicating the drift of the conversation. Still, he caught the words "rich" and "Englishman" and one or two others which suggested that they were referring to him.

When he had finished he knocked his knife against a glass as a signal that he wished to have the things cleared away. In response to this "ring" the door opened, and a girl of about seventeen years entered the room.

"Does monsieur require anything more?" asked the girl in halting French.

"Nothing more, mademoiselle," answered Morton, looking at her in surprise and admiration. "Where did you learn French?" (and he added to himself) "By Jove, that girl will be a beauty some day!"

"We lived in France for about a year, monsieur," responded the girl simply.

"And why did you come back to this place?" inquired Morton, forgetting that it was no business of his.

The girl looked slightly confused; by the flickering light of the lamp he could see that she coloured slightly.

"My uncle's business was finished and—and he came here," she replied after a pause. "Monsieur is English?"

"Yes."

"Ah, the English are rich and can travel; they can see everything and have everything. It is nice to be rich, but it is dangerous sometimes." And she hurriedly gathered up the supper things and took them away, leaving Morton somewhat puzzled concerning her meaning.

When next she appeared, which was about five minutes later, he had another question to ask.

"Who is that playing the violin? He is not much of a player and the instrument isn't worth a rap, but he is bringing music out of it all the same. Who is it?"

"My uncle. He is very fond of music; it is the only thing that softens him and——"

She stopped abruptly and Morton smiled significantly.

"His reputation is not of the best, I fancy," he remarked quietly. "His face is not unpleasant and he can make it look agreeable, but there is an expression in his eyes which shows that he can be very disagreeable."

The girl shot a swift glance at him and smiled expressively. The frank speech and easy manner of the guest charmed her to the point of speaking openly.

"He is a bad man, and he treats my aunt and me shamefully at times. People say he has done wicked things; it is well to keep one's bedroom door locked. Monsieur is a musician also," she added quickly, pointing to the violin case, with the evident intention of changing the conversation.

Harry replied in the affirmative and inquired when his bed would be ready; the girl replied that the room would be at his disposal within fifteen minutes and then left him.

Kardanes, the host, knocked at the door a quarter of an hour later and informed him that the room was ready, Morton followed him along a passage and up a flight of twelve stairs to a room which was to be his resting place for the night.

Morton had been pondering on the remark of Anita about riches being sometimes a danger, and this made him see evil designs in the countenance of the man who was now smiling and bowing before him.

"You will call me in good time to-morrow morning," requested the young man. "I must set out early, as I have to meet some friends a few miles from here."

"Certainly, monsieur," was the smiling reply. "Monsieur has been travelling alone for some days?"

Morton pretended to be occupied with a survey of the room and ignored this question, which seemed to have a sinister meaning.

Finding that no answer was given, Kardanes placed the lamp on a table near the little window and left the room. When the door closed behind him, Harry locked it and seated himself on the bed.

"Nice place, this," he mused. "Window barred, so no one can get in that way. I have locked the door, but I will push a table against it to make sure. Then I think I shall be safe with my revolver close at hand."

He felt for the weapon, and then uttered an exclamation of annoyance; he remembered having displayed it ostentatiously on the evening before, when he placed it on a table in his bedroom, at his previous stopping-place. It was evident that he had quite forgotten it and had left it there.

But Morton was no coward and he did not allow this to worry him; moreover, he was very tired, and he was pretty certain that no one could get into the room without disturbing him. He sat down on the bed to think; he remembered lying down, as being the more easy posture for the proper flow of thought; and that was all he did remember for some time until he was aroused by a touch.

His first impulse was to throw aside that hand that was on his shoulder—at first it seemed that it was about his throat—and spring to his feet; but he was restrained by the sounds of Anita's voice uttering words of warning in a low tone.

"Hush! You are in danger. I have come to warn you. He knows that you have money and he is not scrupulous. He has made up his mind to have that money, even if he has to take your life. I suspected it while you were at supper, and when you had retired and I was sent to bed, I crept downstairs and heard them talking about you. You must escape!"

Morton sat up on the bed and looked round the room.

"How did you get in?" he asked. "I locked the door and placed the table against it."

"There is another door. I came that way, he will come also. He has blocked the proper door on the outside so that you cannot escape through that," returned Anita hurriedly and anxiously. "There is only one way to get out of this room, and that is by the secret door. Oh, make haste, make haste! If you do not pass through the door and the corridor before he reaches the other end, you will have no chance, for he is armed and you—you have no arms, have you?"

"No," answered Morton, now fully awake to his danger, "but I shall not fall an easy victim to that rascal even though I have no firearm. And he would not dare——"

"He would not hesitate to shoot," Anita assured him, clasping her hands in an agony of mind. "If people hear the noise, what does that matter in this place? He can leave here, if necessary, as he left the little French village. Oh, make haste!"

Morton felt now that there was no time to lose if he wished to avoid an encounter in which he would most

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probably be worsted. He started to his feet, caught up his violin case and other belongings, and was about to step toward the secret door with Anita when the latter stopped short with a low cry.

"He is coming; it is too late!"

Morton listened and heard a stealthy footstep. Two considerations flashed though his mind; Anita's safety and his own—for he felt that the girl would suffer for her interference. What was to be done?

"Quick!" cried Anita as an inspiration came to her. "Play, play! That violin is your best weapon of defence against him!"

Morton grasped the idea at once.

Dropping his other things, he hastily opened the case and took out his beloved instrument. With skilled fingers he tightened the strings and ran the bow lightly over them; then, having satisfied himself that the instrument was ready for use, he began to play one of the most popular of the Greek national melodies which he had learnt in Athens.

He played with more earnestness than ever before; he threw his whole soul into that air and all his skill and natural talent into the proper rendering of it. So engrossed was he in his task that he only dimly remembered the fact that a would-be murderer was approaching his room and that the next few minutes might be his last.

He did not notice Anita—he was unconscious for the time of her presence; he did not know that she had crouched behind the door through which her uncle would enter.

The national melody was followed by a favourite Italian air and still the young traveller played on. Anita, who was listening with bated breath, herself enchanted by the glorious music that was being drawn from the old violin, heard the stealthy footsteps approach nearer and nearer and asked herself, whether this strange weapon of defiance would prove effective.

The footsteps became slower and slower until the door was reached and then they stopped. Anita's heart beat violently as she waited for what might follow. Would Kardanes enter, filled with deadly intent or would he be touched by the music and turned from his diabolical design?

The moments passed and the door was not opened. To Anita those few seconds were an age of anxiety; to Morton they were of less importance, for he had almost forgotten in his love of music why he had begun to play.

The door moved and Anita cowered still lower and breathed a prayer for help. The plan had failed, and in a moment she would hear the report of a pistol and see the young Englishman fall to the ground, dead or dying!

The door opened to about one third of its width and a face peered in. The lamp was still burning and Anita saw her uncle's visage, but oh! how changed. Intead of the very picture of evil which she had expected, she saw a face lighted up with an almost divine expression, and she knew that Morton was safe and that music had once more exerted its grand influence for good.

After one long, intense look at the violinist, Kardanes—revolver in hand—stepped softly back into the corridor, closing the door gently behind him. Anita heard his retreating footsteps as he went slowly back, and when she knew that he had reached the end of the passage she stood up with a long drawn sigh and stole away in the same direction.

* * * * *

It was quite half-an-hour afterwards before Morton ceased playing and looked about him.

Anita was gone, he heard no sound and saw no sign of danger.

He passed his hand over his forehead and asked himself if he had been dreaming, but without being able to answer the question satisfactorily. Then he threw himself on the bed in a semi-conscious condition and lay thus until he was aroused about six o'clock by a knock at his door.

It was the summons to breakfast.

He did not see Kardanes again; Anita informed him that her uncle was busy at the back. Morton took the opportunity to thank her with heartful sincerity for her help and having received an assurance that she was in no danger on that account—her uncle not having seen her, he gave her his card and begged her to write to him whenever she needed assistance. He tried to press some money into her hand, but she refused it.

* * * * *

He heard from her about three years later; her uncle was dead, and she was engaged as maid to an English lady resident in Athens.

Morton has settled down since then, and among his most cherished possessions is the old fiddle which stood him in such good stead on the night when his life was threatened by Kardanes.

W. T. H.

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SOME INCIDENTS OF PRAIRIE LIFE.

In the old days of the overland trail, the pony express and the lumbering stagecoach, stage stations had been erected at a distance of fifteen miles apart throughout the length of the whole trail. After the first thirty miles from the Missouri river no coach was safe from attack until it reached San Francisco.

It was a misnomer to say the stations were "erected." Most of them were dug-outs—that is, a hole or cellar four or five feet deep was dug and then covered with slabs of timber to support two feet of dirt. The stables were made in the same way, while the hay was stacked.

There was generally an underground passage leading from the house to the stables. House and stables were loopholed for rifles, the doors constructed of timber or covered with boiler iron, and there was not one of them which was not attacked a dozen times over.

The Indians could not use fire as a weapon, nor could they carry a station by assault, but they captured many of them by trickery or siege. In no case was the life of a company employee ever spared.

The distance between stations, with the feeble garrison maintained at each, prevented any hope of relief in case of attack. Indeed the orders were:

"Defend your own station. Only the last man alive is to break through the Indians if he can."

Never were greater hardihood and bravery exhibited than by the men selected to drive the coaches. Knowing what the risks were, it seems strange that any passengers could have been found to fill them, but in the last two years preceding the opening of the Pacific road the coaches averaged five passengers each way, and many of these were women.

At a few points on the long route a guard rode for a few miles with the coaches, but for most of the distance the driver and passengers must take care of themselves.

There was hardly a week without its tragedy. As the stage toiled through the heavy sands of some strip of desert, or met several miles of stony and up hill trail, a band of a hundred yelling warriors would suddenly appear.

The driver must fight as well as guide his excited team. The passengers fired from the open doors, and if the attack were beaten off it was a case of luck.

It was when the Overland company finally appealed to the government to clear its route through Kansas, that General Custer was sent out with a brigade of troopers.

Fourteen stations had been attacked and wiped out, and stages had ceased to run over a distance of almost 200 miles. Custer could not hope to strike a telling blow against the hordes in the field, but he laid his plans to open the route and drive the Indians back from it.

As we followed the trail to the west we passed station after station showing gruesome sights. In each and every case a stout defence had been made, but the Indians had prevailed.

Kegs of powder had been used to blow open the doors or tear out the roofs, and even though the warriors had lost ten to one they had destroyed the station. Burning Hill was a relay station, with eight men to guard it and care for the extra horses.

The last stage from the east had come in after a race of five miles, with the driver and three male passengers wounded—some of them twice and three times. It was one of the largest and most defensible stations on the route, and there was no thought of anything but beating the Indians off, no matter what their force.

Custer's whole command witnessed the arrival of the last stage from the west, the last for several weeks. From a hilltop three miles from the trail, with impassable gullies between, we saw the coach come up the trail with 100 Indians pursuing it. It was a running fight, which aroused every man to the highest pitch of excitement, but we were helpless to extend aid.

Through the clear air of a summer's afternoon we saw the stage horses shot down and the coach overtaken.

The passengers made a brave fight to the last, but not one of them escaped.

It was night before we had made our detour and reached the station, and the Indians had departed long before.

They had captured the station two hours before they attacked the stage. It had held out against them for three days, and it was not until forty Indians had been killed or wounded that they got possession of it by digging under the walls and using a keg of powder.

If Burning Hill had failed to hold out, how would it be with Pawnee Flat, the next station to the west, and with White Horse, the next after that? The first was a four man station and the next a relay with eight.

As we rode away through the night not a man had the slightest hope for Pawnee, though we knew it would have been defended as long as one of the four could lift a gun.

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We reached it at about eleven o'clock. It was as we had feared. Over two hundred Indians had swarmed down out of the hills at daybreak the morning before, and, though they had lost a score of men, the dug-out had been carried by assault and its defenders butchered.

We waited here half an hour to give the poor corpses burial and then pushed on towards White Horse.

It was not until we got within two miles of the station that our fears were relieved. Then we heard the reports of rifles and knew that the place was still holding out.

The station was situated about midway up a long, bare hill. To the west of it was a coulee, or dry ravine, with banks twenty feet high.

We had with us a couple of scouts who knew every rod of the overland trail, and when within a mile of the station, these men were sent forward to spy out the situation.

They returned after awhile to report that Spotted Horse and about a hundred and fifty of his "dog soldiers," as the Cheyennes were called, were laying siege to the station and had evidently occupied the ground for two or three days.

The ground round the dug-out was so open that the Indians dared not "rush" the place, nor was there any show to use a keg of powder without reckless exposure. With their allies holding the trail to the east, the Cheyennes had entered upon a siege in hopes to starve the employees out.

Their war ponies and most of the band were lying up in the dry ravine for the night. This ravine had no opening to the south and was therefore a *cul de sac.*

The first signs of dawn were in the sky when we saddled up, mounted, and the whole of us pushed forward, led by the scouts, for the mouth of the ravine.

We had the Spencer carbines, each with a full magazine, and as we got the order to charge each man began shooting. When a carbine was empty, it was thrown away and a revolver used in its place. When the revolver was empty, it was cast aside for the sabre.

Extended from bank to bank, we swept up the ravine, and we had nothing to do but kill. Taken by surprise, the Cheyennes thought only of getting away.

We had scarcely got to work when the eight men who had been cooped up in the dug-out sallied out to take a hand in the fight, and it was made the saddest sunrise the Cheyennes tribe had ever seen.

Not a pony could escape out of that trap. Numbers of the warriors scrambled up the banks and got safely away, but nearly every one left his weapons behind.

The fight did not last above thirty minutes, and our loss was only three men wounded.

Down in that ravine we harvested seventy-eight dead Indians, and on the banks above the stage men counted twenty-two more. We got upwards of a hundred rifles, about fifty pistols, one hundred and thirty ponies and a wagon load of miscellaneous stuff.

Every Indian lying there was a dead one. Custer had said: "Shoot to kill," and there were no wounded or prisoners.

Among the killed were Spotted Horse, Big Moon and White Bird, and that fight broke the backbone of the Cheyenne nation.

Their part in the war was to capture all the stations west of Burning Hill, but they had only taken Pawnee Flat. They never rode to war again.

Within a week they were suing for peace, and they were the first to be gathered on a reservation.

C. B. Lewis.

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THE BRAIN GYMNASIUM

IN these competitions a prize of £2 will be awarded each week to the competitor whose attempt we receive giving the correct solutions of all the puzzles. If more than one is absolutely correct the prize of £2 will be given to the first correct attempt dealt with.

If no lists of absolutely correct solutions are sent in the first prize will be awarded to the competitor whose attempt is first dealt with showing the fewest mistakes.

Each week we shall award in addition to the above, either ten of our silver plated pencil-cases or ten popular six shilling novels to be distributed amongst the competitors whose attempts are absolutely correct and have failed to win the first prize, or, if no complete lists of correct solutions are received, to those whose attempts show the fewest mistakes.

Write all your solutions on one sheet of paper, putting the number against each. Post the batch in an envelope marked "Brain Gymnasium," to reach the Editor, SHORT STORIES, 18 Henrietta Street, Covent Garden, W.C., by first post on Monday, June 11th, 1900.

No. 130.

HALF an inch before the trees, and half a foot and half a yard after them, leads to an English town. What is it?

No. 131.

WHAT sentence is this?

GROUND
TURN EVIL STAR.

No. 132.

TAKE one word from each line of the following rhyme, and you'll find a proverb:

Two children bend above a book,
Their curly heads together look,
And are the wonders that they spy
Better revealed to childish eye
Than to some solitary drone,
One who, alas! is older grown?

No. 133.

FORM a square word with the equivalents of the following:

TO LISTEN
COMFORT
POISONOUS SNAKES
REMAINDER

No. 134.

My first is in parson, but not in the church,
My second in alder, but never in birch,
My third is in stone, though nowhere in rock,
My fourth is in stocking, but never in sock,
My fifth is in merriment, but not in fun,
My sixth is in pancake and also in bun,
My seventh in coal is, but never in wood,
My eighth is in evil, but never in good,
I think very soon this enigma you'll guess,
My whole is a virtue we all should possess.

No. 135.

My FIRST, a home to weary man
By care and toil oppressed,
A haven from domestic strife
Of peaceful calm and rest.

For when with FIRST man's better half
Tries to lay down my LAST,
To FIRST he hies and shelters there
Until the storm has passed.

Although my LAST alone implies
Both order, power, and right,
When with my FIRST my LAST is joined,
Disorder comes to light.

RESULT OF BRAIN GYMNASIUM.

Nos. 106 to 111.

THE prize of £2 has been awarded this week to Mr. J. Ellis, G.I., A2 room, Whale Island, Portsmouth, whose attempt was the first correct one dealt with.

Each of the following have been awarded a copy of "Master Key," by Florence Warden:

Miss E. Francis, 9 Rue Pasteur, Nimes, Gard, France.
P. J. Murray, 61 Bolcyn Road, Forest Gate, E.
E. Gregory, 47 Barlow Road, Levenshulme.
Miss F. Tylcoat, 123 Chester Terrace, Preston Park, Brighton.
Benjamin Hammond, 11 North Road, Brighton.
John Forbes, 13 Waverley Gardens, Crossingloof, Glasgow.
P. Jones, Beechholm, Woodend Park, Grassendale.
J. B. Johnson, 91 Park Road East, Birkenhead.
E. M. Jay, 92 Fairbridge Road, Upper Holloway, N.
John McMillan, 126 Crown Street, Aberdeen.

SOLUTIONS TO PUZZLES.

Nos. 112 to 117.

No. 112. SPARROW.

No. 113.

I R O N
R A G E
O G R E
N E E D

No. 114. **Meat and onions (and on i on s).**

No. 115. **IT—ME. TIME.**

No. 116. **Not a nobleman (using no *ble*).**

No. 117.

A S P
SEA W EED
BL A ME
O N E
PA S TE
IM P E RIL
M A D

SHORT STORIES ADVERTISEMENT RATES.

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" half	6	5	0

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ALL IS BETTER THAN PART.

A CERTAIN beautiful and intelligent woman, whom the present writer knows, had the misfortune in her youth to receive an injury to the right leg which threatened to make her permanently lame. After long and careful treatment, the surgeons were compelled to take this view; and she and her friends reluctantly looked at the matter in the same light. There were facts in the case that rendered such a fate exceedingly painful for her. At the time of the accident she had bright prospects, socially, and was affianced to a young man in every way worthy of her. She assured him of her willingness, under the circumstances, to cancel the engagement, but, true and sensible fellow that he was, he would not hear of it, and—as I make this note of the facts—they have now lived a happy married life for twenty years.

Recently, on my asking whether she had found her disability as serious an obstacle to her enjoyment as she once feared, she answered, "It comes to this: When I had made up my mind to be a cripple all my days I recovered to a good degree my cheerfulness, and have since got on fairly well."

"But——?" queried the biographer, with lifted eyelids.

"Yes," she responded, sadly, "there is always that; always the thought of *what might have been.*"

Still, she is a brave lady; she doesn't complain. She knows her case is only one out of millions. For some reason or other, the great majority of us have to accept from ten to fifteen shillings in the pound out of what is really due to us.

"Although not laid up," writes another woman, with a variation of the main theme, "I continued in this low state year after year. I was never critically ill, yet I never knew what it was to be properly well.

"My ailment, whatever it was, first came upon me in the early part of 1887. It was then I began to feel low, weak, and out of sorts. I experienced much pain and a sense of weight at the right side, and feared I might have liver complaint. My appetite dwindled away until I had scarcely any real relish for food. And after eating—even plain and simple things—I had a feeling of distress and sickness.

"My sleep became fitful and broken. I seldom got anything like a good night's rest, and rose in the morning worn out and exhausted. With this my strength declined until, through weakness, I could hardly get about. Although not laid up, I continued in this low state year after year. I was never critically ill, yet I never knew what it was to be properly well.

"I consulted doctors and went to the Middlesex Hospital, also the University Hospital; but from first to last I found no actual benefit from their treatment.

"In September last (1897), having heard of the good done by Mother Seigel's Syrup, particularly in diseases of the stomach and digestive organs, I concluded to lay aside other medicines and try this one. I procured a bottle from Mr. S. Rogers, Chemist, in Crowndale Road, and after taking it found myself greatly improved. It seemed to drive away all my wretched, languid feelings. My appetite then returned and I began to gain strength. The benefit continued, and after using this remedy a short time longer I was better than I had been for years. I now keep Mother Seigel's Syrup at hand, and if I ail anything, a few doses set me right. For the information of others, I am willing you should publish my letter if you wish. — Mrs. Louisa Goodin, 39 Allcroft Road, Kentish Town, London, N.W., Jan 19th, 1898."

To be resigned and comparatively content under life-long lameness is rational and philosophical. Blessed indeed are they who make the best of an irremediable calamity. Wonderful exhibitions of the highest traits of human nature are seen under those conditions. But most of us prefer a normal existence, with all our faculties and powers at command. Two good legs are better than one good leg and a crutch; and perfect health is better than chronic illness *plus* a chastened spirit. And one of the functions of Mother Seigel's Syrup is to restore to sound health those who have been living, as Mrs. Goodin did, neither quite in bed nor quite out of it. Don't rest resigned to a half-and-half life now you have learned how to get your full inheritance.

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